

# Kent on Sunday

www.kentnews.co.uk November 27, 2016

Mid edition No 740

## CRIME

### Serial killer begins life behind bars

Victim's family vows to fight on in quest for answers

## HEALTH

### Major shake-up in hospital services

Health trust outlines dramatic proposals for trio of sites

## WILDLIFE

### Your guide to spotting the 'human swan'

Look to the skies to see end of a remarkable journey

## HEALTH

### 'I got HIV from NHS'

**Exclusive:** To mark World AIDS Day we reveal one man's incredible story



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# Kent on Sunday

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## One man's brave story to make you stop and think

I THINK we all know folk who allow health concerns to define everything they do. They apply the label themselves and then allow everything to be filtered via their condition.

It's hard to blame them, of course; health is something which can play a significant role in our lives, influencing what we do and how we do it.

But sometimes you meet someone who has been dealt a hand which almost defies belief. Whose health conditions make almost everything else pale into insignificance and makes you stop and take stock of just how fortunate most of us are.

Inside this edition we speak to Lee Stay. For the very first time he has spoken about living with HIV - even many of his friends will only find out first when they read this newspaper. He is one of the many haemophiliacs who were caught up in the blood contamination scandal, of which many readers will be



Editor **Chris Britcher**

familiar - we've campaigned on behalf of the victims for many months. He was infected with HIV and Hepatitis C when a teenager through blood products he was administered by the NHS. That subsequently led him to pneumonia, a liver transplant, an aggressive blood cancer, the loss of his job and breakdown of his marriage. Yet he remains positive and refuses to let his condition rule his world - despite its best efforts.

He is a man who has faced a life of challenges and hurdles and refuses

to give up. Read his story and aside from some of the horrific aspects of it, there is inspiration to draw from him and what he has experienced. Not only has he had to fight simply to survive, but his bravery in speaking out, to coincide with World AIDS Day on Thursday, is something which should make you compelled to hear his story.

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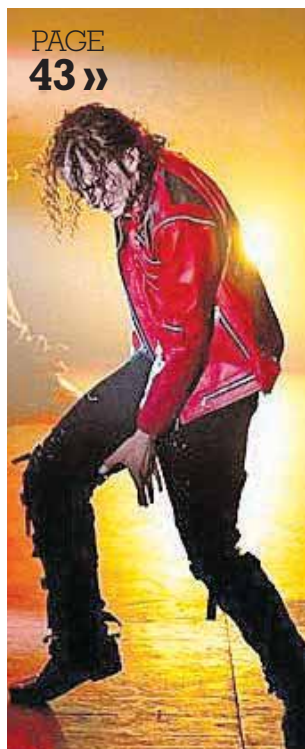
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## Hospital fears after trust unveils major shake-up

By Tom Pyman

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AN MP says he will fight any potential scheme to move A&E services from his constituency hospital in a controversial shake-up of healthcare provision in Kent.

Early this week plans were unveiled to place specialist services currently offered at three hospitals in the east of the county into just one site.

Health bosses across the NHS, Kent County Council and Medway Council have published a 'health and social care sustainability and transformation' plan to improve health, wellbeing and standards of care across the county in the face of a potential £486m budget hole by 2020/21.

In a radical move, the East Kent Hospitals University NHS Foundation Trust is looking to evaluate how services are run at its three major hospitals: Kent & Canterbury, the William Harvey in Ashford and the Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother (QEQM) in Margate.

However, it is unclear which of these will become a 'super hospital' before firm plans are submitted for



**THREAT:** The public are urged to consult on plans which are being put forward. Kent & Canterbury, pictured

public consultation in June at the earliest.

Trust chief executive Matthew Kershaw said: "Our early thinking for our three main hospitals, is to have two emergency hospital centres which include 24/7 A&E and planned care, with one of these providing specialist services.

"The third site would be a hospital dedicated to planned care, for example hip and knee replacements, and rehabilitation, alongside

a GP-led urgent care centre.

"These will be supported by strong local care in community settings or at home. So, while you might not be treated at your closest hospital, you will get care at the east Kent hospital that can provide the best treatment for you."

Sir Roger Gale, whose Thanet North constituency is home to the QEOM Hospital, told us he and his fellow MPs would be firmly involved in discussions over the

plans as they develop.

"I am opposed to any move that might affect A&E services," he said.

"The geography of east Kent unfortunately means the main roads do not go to a convenient middle - it's a long haul journey from Thanet to Ashford.

"We have to maximise resources and maintain as much healthcare locally as possible, but you can't have everything everywhere at the top level and we want the top level."

## Former MP wins race to be chair of British Olympic Association

A FORMER Kent MP has been elected chairman of the British Olympic Association.

Sir Hugh Robertson, who was born in Canterbury and served as Conservative MP for Faversham and Mid Kent between 2001 and 2015, received the backing of the 43 members of the National Olympic Committee to replace current incumbent Lord Coe.

A former minister for sport and the Olympics, Sir Hugh played a pivotal role in the delivery of the London 2012 Games.

Currently vice-chairman of the BOA, he stood against Richard Leman to win a four-year term as chairman, succeeding Lord Coe who will now concentrate on his presidency of the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) after four years in the post.

Sir Hugh said: "Following on from my involvement with London 2012, it is a great privilege for me to become chairman of the BOA.

"After the success of Rio 2016, this is an extraordinarily exciting moment for British Olympic sport.

"I want to build on this success and drive the organisation forward both on and off the field of play.

"I would like to pay tribute to my friend and predecessor Lord Coe for the positive impact he has had on British sport, and in particular Olympic sport and it is with great pride that I follow in his footsteps. The success of Team GB does not come by chance and the meticulous preparations and dedication to the athletes will remain the forefront of our work."

The BOA works in partnership with its members and key stakeholders to deliver world-leading services and support to enable British athletes to reach their full potential at the Olympic Games, Winter Games and other International Olympic Committee sanctioned events.

As chairman, he will lead the BOA board in mapping out the future direction of the organisation.

## Contaminated earth delays A21 dualling by six months

COMPLETION of the long-awaited multi-million pound dualling of the A21 near Tunbridge Wells will be delayed by six months, it was confirmed this week.

Highways England, which is carrying out the work on the stretch between Pembury and Tonbridge, say it is because of earth removed from the site being contaminated with asbestos and heavy metals.

It now means the road scheme, to ease one of the county's most notorious traffic pinch points, will not be completed until the summer of next year. The original completion date was for next month.

A spokesman for Highways England said: "Since this discovery we have removed 35,000 tonnes of contaminated soil but the extra work has delayed us."

## Refugee to fight Chris Wells for KCC seat in May vote

A REFUGEE who arrived in Kent from Saddam Hussain's Iraq has been chosen by the Labour Party to stand against Thanet District Council Ukip leader Chris Wells in next year's Kent County Council elections.

Aram Rawf fled Iraq in 1999 and is now a British citizen working as an assistant manager at a Broadstairs hotel. He has trained with St John's Ambulance and won tourism

awards for Thanet.

Mr Rawf said: "I understand the problems of people coming into Thanet with nothing and also of those who have lived here all their lives struggling to survive in deep poverty. The policies of the Tory government and the Ukip council are making things worse."

Elections are due to take place in May 2017.



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## Blow as insurance firm confirms 150 jobs to go

SOME 150 jobs are being lost in Tunbridge Wells after an agreement was struck between an insurance firm and unions.

Employees at AXA Insurance's Century Place office in the town will now undergo redundancy consultations as it relocates its direct motor claims customer operations team to Birmingham in a transition expect-

ed to be completed by May next year.

Bosses insist the change does not impact the other 147 staff in the technical operations teams, the engineering teams, nor any other part of AXA's motor claims operation and discussions are in progress with AXA PPP Healthcare about the potential for redeployment of affected staff to its Tunbridge Wells office.



**OFF?:** Ukip leader Nigel Farage

## Farage could 'move to US', claim reports

NIGEL Farage is considering moving from his Kent home to start a new life in the US, according to reports.

The interim Ukip leader, who currently lives in Westerham and serves Kent as a south east MEP, said he had got his country back after Britain voted to leave the European Union in June but, according to The Times, wants to make the leap across the Atlantic to feel "freer" from public attention.

It comes after president-elect Donald Trump tweeted that Mr Farage would do "a great job" as the British ambassador to the US, however Downing Street has repeatedly played down any suggestion he could be offered such a role.

In response, Mr Farage said it was time for Number 10 to recognise that "the world has changed", as he claimed he was "in a good position, with the president-elect's support, to help".

Earlier this week, he also claimed he'd "have to" run for parliament for an eighth time were a by-election to be triggered in South Thanet over claims the Conservatives broke spending rules last year.

He lost out to Tory Craig Mackinlay in 2015's general election.

Mr Farage failed to return calls from KoS about a move to the US.

## Family of murdered chef vows to fight on as IPCC launches investigation

By Tom Pyman

THE family of a Gravesend chef murdered by serial killer Stephen Port has vowed to fight on for answers on the police handling of the case.

Daniel Whitworth's stepmother Mandy Pearson supported his grief-stricken father Adam throughout the trial at the Old Bailey, which concluded with Port receiving a life sentence this week.

It comes as 17 Met police officers face investigation for possible misconduct over the catalogue of failures in catching the killer.

Scotland Yard bosses have admitted "potential opportunities" were missed and that investigators who failed to see "striking similarities" between the deaths of four men had only patchy knowledge of the use of drugs linked to gay sex.

Watchdog the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) is investigating whether homophobia played a part in the errors, and the



**GRIEF:** Daniel Whitworth's family

Met's advisers from the gay community have called on the force to deal with "any systemic or cultural issues" that may have come into play.

Speaking outside court following Port's conviction, Ms Pearson said

the "circle of camaraderie" among the affected families had helped see them through the "dark days".

"As for our boy, Daniel, we feel unable to comment in any detail at this time, suffice to say, we are bereft at the loss of such a clever, talented and much loved boy and we have yet to concentrate on other areas of accountability.

"An investigation is, as I am sure you are all aware by now, in the hands of the IPCC. The fight goes on until all our questions are answered.

"Our small family has had to endure unspeakable grief, various stages of 'coming to terms' and face up to some of the most incredible turn of events in the space of two years. It has been difficult to say the least and has had a huge impact on our lives which will never be the same again. We are emotionally and physically exhausted.

"Stephen Port has been found guilty of murder and we are one step closer to making sure he will never have the opportunity to put another family through this again."

## Police probe into sea death at Folkestone

THE death of a 39-year-old woman who was pulled from the sea in Folkestone on Tuesday, has been referred to the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC).

It has been revealed that the evening before she died police were contacted in relation to concern for her welfare. The referral to the IPCC is mandatory in these circumstances.

A major search operation was launched after a woman was reported missing and last seen at Folkestone Harbour. She was spotted by lifeboat crews and airlifted from the sea and taken to a local hospital but did not survive.

A police spokesman said: "Police are not currently treating this as suspicious and a report is being prepared for the coroner."

Robert Bendhiah, duty coxswain of Dover RNLI lifeboat, said: "We do not yet know the reasons why this woman was in the sea, but needless to say it is an awful outcome and the crews thoughts and prayers are with her family and friends."

## Rescue mission after migrants call 999

SEVEN suspected migrants were found in a boat in the early hours of Wednesday morning in the English Channel - three of them suffering from hypothermia.

A major search operation was put into practice after a phone call from the boat was made as it floated off the coast of Dover and eventually found at Folkestone Harbour. Police, ambulance, coastguard and the rescue helicopter were all called into action.

A coastguard spokesman explained: "A 999 call was received at just before 6am and a boat with seven people on board including three with suspected hypothermia was then found.

"The search and rescue efforts continued until it was established that this boat was the one that had made the original call."

Charlie Elphicke, MP for Dover and Deal, said the incident showed the need "to be more vigilant than ever" following the closure of the Jungle camp at Calais, adding "this is yet another sign of the extreme lengths people will go to, risking their lives trying to break into Britain".

## PCC to inject £100k in restorative justice

A £100,000 pledge has been made by Kent's police and crime commissioner to provide restorative justice services in the county over the next 12 months.

Restorative justice focuses on the rehabilitation of offenders through reconciliation with victims.

The money, to be shared by Salus and Kent Mediation Services, will mean more victims of crime will potentially be able to get closure on their ordeal and move on with their lives.

Salus is employed by the Kent Criminal Justice Board to train and deliver such services.

PCC Matthew Scott said: "This is not a form of punishment. If both parties agree, the process is in addition to whatever sentence the offender may receive.

"It's important to stress that if a victim doesn't feel restorative justice is right for them then there is no pressure to enter into the process, but at its best it can empower victims to understand they are not to blame for what has happened."

See the PCC website to have your say on restorative justice.



# MP's plan to crack down on 'fake' medals gathers steam

By Adele Couchman

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A PROPOSED law to prosecute people wearing military medals they have not earned would protect genuine heroes, a Tory MP has said.

Dartford's Gareth Johnson called the practice "insulting", as he put forward a private member's bill on Friday that would reintroduce legislation making it a criminal offence, which would target 'Walter Mitty' characters who pretend to be something they are not.

The government has indicated it will support Mr Johnson's Awards for Valour (Protection) Bill, which would carry a three month jail term.

Speaking at the Bill's second reading in the Commons, Mr Johnson said: "To claim you're a military hero when you are not is wrong, and to steal valour is wrong.

"The so-called Walter Mittys, parading themselves at Remembrance Service parades and elsewhere, sporting medals they have not earned, is not only insulting, but it undermines those veterans who have legitimately earned them."

Mr Johnson, who showed MPs his great-grandfather's military medal, said the new legislation would not stop family members from wearing medals their relatives had



**DEBATE:** Wearing medals you have not earned could carry a three month jail term

earned. He also said the Bill would be sensitive to those with mental health issues.

Mr Johnson added: "What I want to do is to make sure we catch only those who intend deliberately to deceive others."

It was backed by Sevenoaks MP and defence minister Michael Fallon and South Thanet's Craig Mackinlay.

However, Conservative MP for Shipley, Philip Davies, said: "Unfortunately I don't see this Bill as either being necessary or actually helpful. I very much believe in freedom, warts

and all. That sometimes means the freedom to do daft, stupid and even annoying things without the threat of being criminalised."

Legislation making the unauthorised wearing of medals a criminal offence was originally introduced in the aftermath of the First World War by the then-secretary for war, Winston Churchill.

It remained on the statute book until 2006 when the new Armed Forces Act came into force and the provisions relating to military decorations were not carried over.

## School confirms it is joining academy trust

STROOD Academy is to become part of the Leigh Academies Trust in the new year, it has been confirmed.

The Medway school, which has some 1,500 pupils and was given a 'good' rating by school inspectors Ofsted after their last visit in 2013, will join Leigh Academies Trust's portfolio of some 16 school across Kent, Medway, Bexley and Greenwich as of January 1.

## Crooks steal car load of Christmas presents

A CAR full of Christmas presents and belonging to an 81-year-old has been stolen from a car park at shopping centre Bluewater after the driver was approached by three men.

They lured the driver out of the car and then one jumped in and drove off from the Lower Thames Walk area on November 15,

## OAP murder hunt

A MURDER investigation has been launched after the death of a 70-year-old man from head injuries in Chatham on Tuesday.

Police were called to an address in Capstone Road and the death is being treated as suspicious.

A major investigation into the circumstances surrounding his death is now taking place. At the time of going to press, he had not been named.

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# PM reassures Henderson of Brexit Article 50 intentions

THE prime minister has reassured a Kent MP there will be "no attempt to weasel out" of triggering Article 50 and begin the process of leaving the European Union.

A Supreme Court judge said the EU referendum was not legally binding ahead of the government's appeal against a High Court decision saying parliamentary approval must be sought before triggering Article 50.

Speaking at Prime Minister's Questions on Wednesday, Tory MP for Sittingbourne, Gordon Henderson, said: "My constituents voted by a margin of 62 per cent to 38 per cent to leave the EU."

"Many of those people are unhappy and frustrated by what they see as delaying tactics by some Remainers who don't seem to



understand the meaning of the word democracy, which I would remind them is government by the people, especially rule of the majority."

In response, Theresa May said: "The vote was held, the turnout

was high, the public gave their verdict. There must be no second referendum, no attempt to weasel out of this – this is the government that will deliver on the vote of the British people."

## Momentum builds again over Labour 'smears'

A CONTROVERSIAL left-wing activist has called for an inquiry into suspensions from the Labour Party, which she describes as a "witch-hunt".

Jackie Walker, a Broadstairs-based campaigner in the pro-Jeremy Corbyn group, Momentum, has twice been suspended from the party and caused a national stir when leaked footage showed her saying she had not found a definition of anti-Semitism she could work with.

The footage also showed her questioning why Holocaust Memorial Day was not more wide-ranging to include other genocides.

She was removed as vice-chair of Momentum days later following widespread criticism, including from some Labour MPs.

At a public meeting called by Thanet Momentum, on Wednesday, Ms Walker said: "I believe I and many others have been subject to nothing less than a witch-hunt to try to stop us voting for Jeremy Corbyn to be Labour leader."

"People's characters have been smeared. Members have been suspended for no good reason. We must have a thorough inquiry to find out who was responsible and hold them to account."

Sheree Bell, a former Ramsgate resident also suspended, added: "We, the purged, have been treated with injustice and disrespect. The whole thing is a disgusting blot on the history of the Labour Party."

The Labour Party declined to comment.

## Black Friday's big surge

BLUEWATER and the county's other major shopping centres were bracing themselves for the busiest weekend of the year so far, courtesy of the Black Friday sales phenomenon.

Thousands were set to try and take advantage of the sales ahead of Christmas with deals running all weekend.

## £26m centre's boost

PLANS for a new leisure centre in Dover accelerated this week after the district council confirmed its consultancy team which will deliver the £26m project.

The project in Whitfield will include an eight-lane pool, sports hall, squash courts, gym and 3G five-a-side football pitches.

## Delays after bridge hit

RAIL travellers on the Maidstone East to Swanley line faced big delays on Thursday after a lorry struck a bridge.

The smash in East Malling, close to the station, caused the line to be completely closed until structural engineers could give it the all clear.

## Jail after cop headbutt

A 24-year-old who headbutted a police officer and left him with a fractured nose as he was being arrested in Hawkhurst is starting a 12-month jail sentence.

James Austin, previously of Curtisden Road, Goudhurst, lashed out on March 9 after police had been called to an incident.



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# Hammond's social care letdown

**Tom Pyman** speaks to the county's chiefs on the chancellor's Autumn Statement delivered in the House of Commons this week, and what it will mean for us as we prepare for Brexit to finally become a reality...

**K**ENT'S finance chief has admitted his "disappointment" at the omission of additional help for local authorities in providing social care in Philip Hammond's Autumn Statement.

There were sighs of relief at Kent County Council 12 months ago when the chancellor's predecessor, George Osborne, introduced the ability for authorities to raise their council tax by an additional two per cent, as well as the allowed 1.99 per cent rise, to provide more cash for social care.

While there is no suggestion of that precept being scrapped, many were baffled to not hear any mention of social care, or indeed the NHS, in Mr Hammond's statement to MPs on Wednesday.

KCC last month outlined plans to slash its own budget by some £108m and council chiefs admitted it was still feeling the pinch, with an increase in demand for social care and cost of services outweighing savings of £13.3m it intends to make.

Deputy leader and cabinet member for finance and procurement on KCC, John Simmonds and corporate director of finance and procurement Andy Wood, told KoS the council was hoping for an early Christmas present in the form of bringing forward the Better Care Fund – a pot of cash originally designated for health that can be used for social care.

The fund will bring KCC £17m in 2018/19 and £33m the following year, but Mr Wood told KoS prior to the Autumn Statement: "We can't wait another 18 months for that extra funding to become available.

"This fund, if we had that now, we could start to deal with some of the pressures we're facing because if you keep taking £80m out every year for six years, there is a limit somewhere and we're getting really close to it."

Cllr Simmonds stopped short of describing the lack of additional funding for social care as a crisis, but admitted concern for the future.

"We have made no secret of the strain we are under in meeting social care pressures and this was one of the things we were really hoping for – perhaps the ability to increase the precept to three per cent – so to get nothing is a disappointment," he said.

"It's not a crisis, it can be managed, but this is going to stretch us and some extra help would have made life a lot easier.

"There may be other things we can do, I sincerely hope it doesn't involve further cuts, but we didn't base our budget on getting anything else from government.

"Particularly when you raise council tax, local government so often gets the blame which is frustrating when you have an election coming up.

"I think there is a general feeling of

acceptance from the public that if you're going to raise it, caring for adults and children is where it should be spent.

"They say 'we don't like it, but okay' but there is a tolerance limit and we may be approaching that soon."

The frustration was shared at Medway Council, whose leader Alan Jarrett told KoS: "It was about what I was expecting, to be honest.

"We've got the social care precept which they think is the answer to all our prayers, but it's not, we'd very much have liked more.

"I've said for a number of years government should take its hands off council tax and let local authorities levy the amount they feel is appropriate."

Elsewhere, Mr Hammond froze fuel duty for the seventh year in a row, but was criticised by campaigners in the county for not going one step further in introducing a cut.

Howard Cox, founder of the Cranbrook-based FairFuelUK group, told KoS: "From our point of view it's a missed opportunity to cut duty by at least three per cent.

"We produced an economic report

saying it would create more jobs and I don't understand why he was not bold enough because his own

treasury said lower fuel duty benefits the economy by boosting GDP.

"The support from the likes of Helen Grant and Charlie Elphicke has been huge and they pushed like mad but this was a real opportunity to help millions of hard working families, small businesses and the haulage industry to prosper."

Suggesting the chancellor may not want to appear to incentivise people to use their cars more, co-founder Quentin Willson added: "This is not a car-friendly budget and the chancellor doesn't appear to be on the side of UK drivers.

"The government makes these claims about helping people but they are not taking advantage of things that are there that would help them."

However, Mrs Grant took her Conservative colleague's announcement as positive news, saying: "This freeze in fuel duty will help many businesses in my constituency of Maidstone and The Weald and it will give a real boost to drivers locally.

"I wholeheartedly support this step and I am grateful to the chancellor for listening to our concerns."

Mr Hammond also revealed there would be £50m of new capital fund-

ing to support the expansion of existing grammar schools in each year from 2017-18 in addition to its proposals for further reforms – a move that was slammed by Labour councillors in Medway.

The party's spokesperson for children and young people, Adam Price, said: "We've been clear from day one that we do not want to abolish grammar schools but that we are opposed to the introduction of more selective schools.

"But, at a time when all schools across Medway and the rest of the country are struggling to cope financially as it is, at a time when local services are being cut left, right and centre and, in an Autumn Statement where the chancellor fails to give any money to an NHS at crisis point, the idea that grammar schools are a priority is laughable and shameful."

While the chancellor announced investment in roads and infrastructure across the country, including £220m for "traffic pinch points on strategic roads", there was frustration as no specific decision was made on the Lower Thames Crossing, earmarked east of Gravesend to ease congestion at Dartford.

The leader of the Labour Party on Dartford Borough Council, Jonathon Hawkes, told us: "It's unacceptable, people have had to live with this uncertainty for years.

"The latest consultation was in March and government experts have

laid out a clear recommendation, but they haven't taken any decision, it's really disappointing."

MP for Dartford Gareth Johnson, however, said he wasn't surprised, insisting any announcement would be made by the Department for Transport, rather than the Treasury.

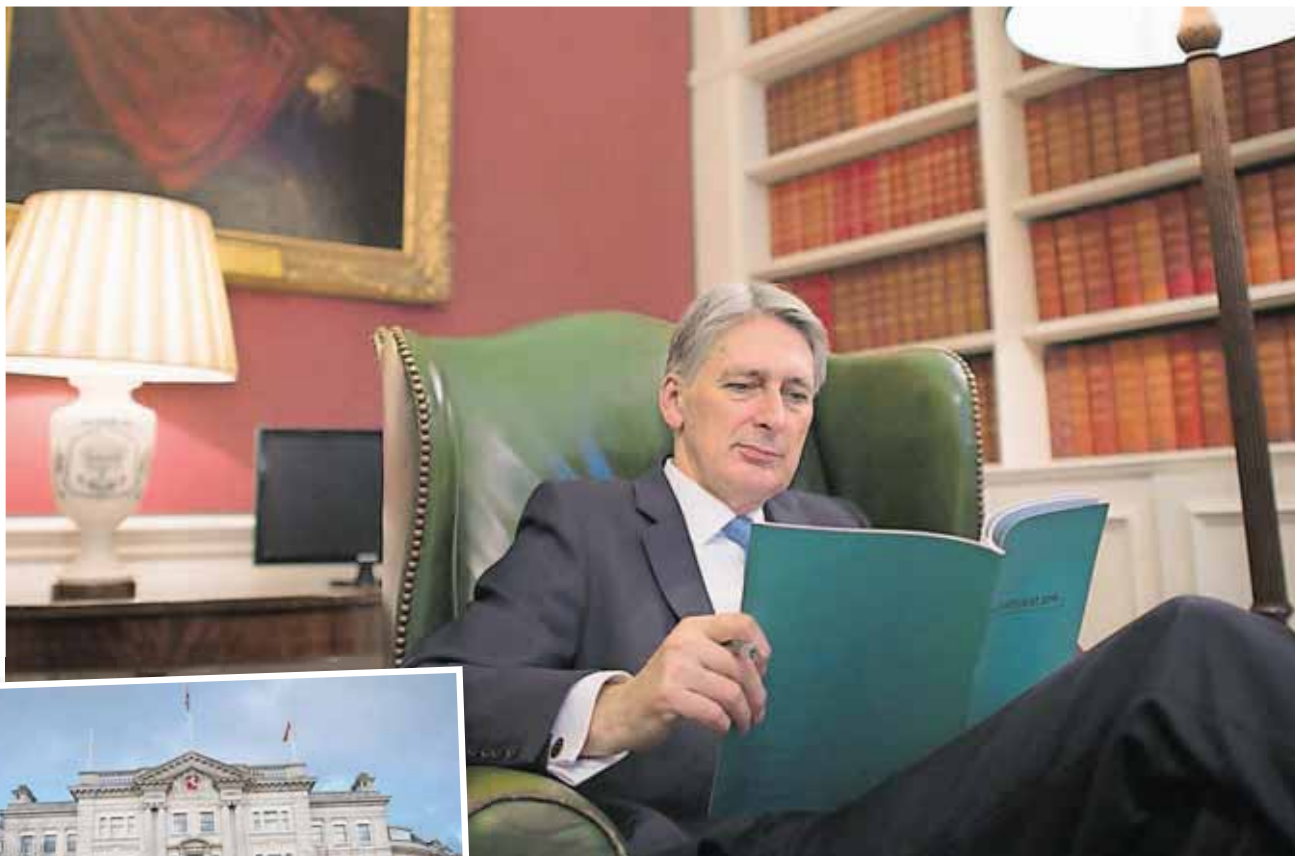
The South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP), meanwhile, which works to drive economic growth in Kent and Medway, insisted it will continue to press the government to commit to the crossing plans.

It welcomed a third round of local growth funding from the chancellor, who announced £683m to be allocated across the south east, south west and London, with detailed breakdowns of what will go where to follow.

SELEP has bid for £229m of this funding, which would unlock a further £756m of private sector investment and other funding, and help create 73,672 more jobs and bring forward 31,052 new homes across the south east.

Chairman Christian Brodie said: "We note that the chancellor was very clear on the importance of investing in infrastructure to boost productivity.

"SELEP notes his commitment to this and we will press very hard to ensure that government detail their commitment to the proposed Lower Thames Crossing at the earliest possible opportunity."



**CHANCELLOR:** Philip Hammond's first Autumn Statement was low on excitement but a blow for many hoping for increased social care and NHS funding. County Hall, Maidstone, left.



# Failings led to death at station

**Tom Pyman** looks at a case which appeared before a tribunal this week over the death of a vulnerable 24-year-old, mother-of-one, who took her own life after walking out of a mental health unit unchallenged...

A CATALOGUE of "gross failings" by a health trust contributed to the death of a Folkestone mother, an inquest has been told.

Natalie Gray, 24, died on April 21, 2015, after jumping in front of a train at Barming station.

She had a long history of mental health difficulties and was under the care of mental health services after attempting to take her own life on a number of occasions.

The ruling prompted the trust involved to implement a major change of procedures and "accept fully" the damning findings.

Ms Gray, who had experienced abuse as a child, had been having suicidal thoughts since 2012 and had subsequently split up with her partner.

Shortly after this her father died, leaving her feeling suicidal and by March 2015, she had attempted to kill herself several times.

The following month she was admitted to Priority House, the inpatient mental health facility at Maidstone Hospital. The Kent and Medway NHS and Social Care Partnership Trust assessed her as low risk on April 17, 20 and 21 despite having expressed clear intent to take her own life.

Staff were not informed at handovers that Ms Gray should be reassessed if she became agitated and tried to leave the ward.

At approximately 3pm on April 21, she became very distressed and expressed a wish to end it all.

Shortly afterwards she was allowed to leave the ward by a member of occupational therapy staff without any risk assessment being conducted.

On realising Ms Gray had left the ward, staff delayed looking for her and contacting the police, the inquest heard, and at approximately 6pm she was found dead at the station.

A jury at Kent and Medway Coroner's Court concluded that there were a number of gross failings by the NHS trust which amounted to neglect and contributed to her death.

These included making insufficient risk assessments, inadequate handovers between staff, failures to convey and enforce the correct procedures for informal patient leave to occupational therapists and failure of occupational therapists to follow those procedures.

The jury also slammed delays in commencing a search, delays in reporting to Kent Police she was missing, and failing to provide them with relevant information and a failure to follow trust policy by not contacting next of kin.

It was noted that it was relevant to the circumstances of Ms Gray's death that the trust failed to record information provided to them by third parties, namely a concerned chaplain and Ms Gray's aunt, Roselin Sayer.

The jury also noted, by a majority of nine to two, that the 999 call taker and the back-up police dispatch officer at Kent Police had failed to elicit the relevant information from the trust.



**RIP:** Natalie Gray died at Barming railway station after leaving Maidstone Hospital, prompting a major review of procedures

Police chiefs say a full independent review of the incident had taken place and its response was "appropriate".

Ms Gray's family were represented by Heather Williams QC, and Alice Hardy, a human rights lawyer at Hodge Jones & Allen.

Ms Hardy said: "Natalie had a troubled upbringing and had been suffering from mental health issues and self-harming since she was a teenager.

"Her family are devastated by her loss and are shocked by the failings of those responsible for her care.

"They believe she should not have been assessed as low risk given her escalating suicidal behaviour and loss of the protective factors in her life.

"The jury's conclusion that Natalie's death was the result of neglect by Kent and Medway NHS and Social

Care Partnership Trust as a result of a catalogue of gross failings by Priority House in the days and hours before she died signals the need for significant changes in how the hospital cares for its vulnerable patients."

Ms Gray's aunt, Roselin Sayer added: "Natalie was a wonderful mother who loved her daughter and wanted the best for her. Losing her has left an enormous hole in our family.

"It has been a fight every step of the way to get to the truth of what happened.

"We were still receiving new information half way through the inquest that shed light on the quality of her care at Priority House.

"We hope that lessons will be learned from Natalie's case and that Priority House will take steps to prevent future deaths by conducting proper risk assessments and improv-

ing procedures for allowing patients off the wards to ensure that no other family has to go through this.

"I would like to add that throughout Natalie's illness the police have been supportive and helpful in the family's dealings with them."

A spokesperson for Kent and Medway NHS and Social Care Partnership Trust said: "Natalie's death was a tragedy. We would like to formally offer our condolences to her family and friends.

"We recognise and accept fully the findings of the inquest and are determined to ensure that we continue to make changes to ensure that our patients are safe.

"We have reviewed our process for how we assess and support people who want to leave the ward, including how we communicate with the police when we have concerns for a patient's safety."

A Kent Police spokesperson said: "The inquest into the death of Natalie Gray concluded on November 22.

"Kent Police now awaits the final report from the coroner into this incident, and we continue to offer our sincere sympathies and thoughts to Natalie's family.

"The actions of the call taker and dispatcher have already been reviewed by the Independent Police Complaints Commission during their investigation, who found Kent Police's response to be appropriate and proportionate.

"Our control room receives an average of around 3,500 calls each day, and we regularly review the level of training for call handlers to ensure they have a structured way of identifying the threat, harm, risk and vulnerability of each and every call."



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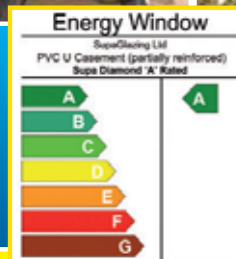
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KL 1/16



# Why we need to grow talent to protect our rural backbone

We take a trip to Hadlow College, near Tonbridge, to discover why ensuring the future generation is exposed to opportunities in land management has never been more essential than after this year's decision to leave the European Union...

By Tom Pyman

[tom.pyman@archant.co.uk](mailto:tom.pyman@archant.co.uk)

WHILE campaigners have stepped up their opposition to development on green land across the Garden of England in recent weeks, work continues on improving land-based industry in the county.

Despite the proposal of large-scale projects for housing, lorry parks and river crossings, Kent of course remains quintessentially green – with 85 per cent of the county currently classified as rural.

The need, then, for industries specialising in that sector to thrive is fundamental for the local economy.

Once upon a time, there were land-based colleges in every county across the UK but today there are barely a dozen, with Kent's own Wye College among those to bite the dust.

Founded in the 15th century, the college specialised in agricultural studies and a well-known study and research centre until its closure in 2009.

Hadlow College, near Tonbridge, could easily have suffered the same fate, but succeeded in turning around its finances and swiftly moved from being rated 'inadequate' to 'good'.

The Hadlow Group now boasts £100m on the balance sheet in terms of net assets, 10,000 students and 1,400 staff across its empire which stretches from Mottingham to Bette-shanger and this week beat off rivals from across the country to win an award from the Institute of Fiscal Turnaround.

The heart of its rural operations, however, is at its Hadlow campus where students undertake a range of training to best equip themselves for an ever-changing industry.

With funding slashed across the board, the college decided on a commercial strategy, whereby it runs businesses such as farm shops, garden centres, tea rooms and a fisheries complex that make a genuine contribution to the rural economy.

Deputy principal and deputy CEO Mark Lumsdon-Taylor told KoS: "When I came here from the City, I was very clear we needed to make the organisation a business, to ensure the students learn how to perform in a business so when they leave they are productive members of society both economically and socially.

"This is not a factory, it's not a churn out.

"We don't just pay lip service to our business partners, we address and structure our curriculum to the needs of the industry and practice it by making sure every part of the business educationally has a commercial arm.

"We take it really seriously, maybe it's because land-based is a little more specialist, but I would challenge people in saying that.

"Land-based is devoted to rural, but it's no different to whether you're a hairdresser, an engineer or a designer, the principles remain the same.

"What point is it having students working in commercial arms, training them how to lose loads of cash or how to have dead plants? But that is what a lot of educational institutions do.

"They have a 'training salon' which is only open from 10am to 3pm because that's when the lecturers work, and it's effectively the blue rinse brigade. How is that training students?

"Everything done commercially is run as stand-alone businesses which can stand on their own two feet financially.

"On December 24, we will be open – are any other colleges or schools in Kent open? Unlikely."

Also on the campus is The Hadlow Rural Community School – the only free school in the country with a dedicated rural ethos.

Opened in temporary accommodation in September 2013 before its new building was unveiled this year, students follow the national curriculum, but in addition, spend one day a week involved in land-based studies.

A total of 15 per cent of the provision is land-based and a high proportion of pupils then go on to continue their studies in related fields at the college.

"Even though it's 11 to 16 year olds, the quality and standards there are as important as if we were running core further education," Mr Lumsdon-Taylor said.

Head teacher Paul Boxall added: "Land-based wise we do pretty much everything: agriculture, horticulture, fisheries, countryside.

"For example our year sevens will learn how to drive a tractor on their own – for them to come in and do something that practical is a real buzz.

"We have students travel from Ashford, Gravesend, Rochester, Dartford, even Oxted in Surrey, they travel quite a way because we're so unique.

"Ninety per cent of our year 11s last year moved on to study either at the college here or



**GROWTH:** Mark Lumsdon-Taylor (inset, by Jon Whitmore) has overseen a radical transformation in fortunes at Hadlow College, near Tonbridge – the only land-based college in the county

at West Kent [another college run by the Hadlow Group].”

College bosses say the plan for the school stemmed from recognition that the land-based sector needed a foundation that would encourage new entrants to related industries.

Of these, food production has been highlighted as a priority, with farming leaders warning last year that more than half of the UK’s food will come from overseas within a generation.

Isobel Bretherton, of the National Farmers’ Union, told KoS this week the decision to leave the European Union has created further uncertainty for the rural industry.

“We are very keen to ensure that our farmers and growers have full, unrestricted access to the marketplace and we need freedom of movement of seasonal workers,” she said.

“Land-based colleges have a massive role to play going forward because it’s so important to

encourage young people to consider life on land.”

Food production is by no means the sole concern, however, with the industry generally failing to recruit skilled entrants across the board, with commercial horticulture in particular recording a global shortage of graduate entrants for several years.

That, staff at the college say, is largely to do with the current structure of education in the

UK, with an emphasis so often on a university route for students.

Head of agriculture, horticulture and rural industries, is Scott Clark.

He told KoS: “The industry is looking for higher qualifications than ever before, especially on the engineering side.

“When I left school I had a high level of motor skills from metal work and woodwork but kids

**Continued on page 18**

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leaving at 16 don't touch it at school because it's all gone out of the syllabus, so they come to us to learn those skills.

"The industry doesn't want to take them on at 16 because they're hopeless to them, so they come to us at 16 and this year 97 per cent of our engineers went into the industry."

Mr Lumsdon-Taylor added: "I feel really strongly that being in further education is not a second class route.

"It offers a whole range of opportunities for young people that are incredibly intelligent and highly skilled.

"What we do here is we bring opportunities that other people would not have had.

"If Hadlow College had gone bust and was closed down, would it have been re-created in today's day and age? No.

"There are people with three As who come in to do garden design or motor engineering with us because we're specialists and very good at it.

"Equally there are people who get three Cs and have got a brilliant technical brain but can't do exams, who will go into engineering and it's about that understanding.

"Some 84 per cent of Hadlow students either progress in the business or go onto related jobs or professions to do with land-based."

The college will also be boosted by the launch of the government's apprenticeship support and knowledge for schools (ASK) project for year 10, 11, 12 and 13 students, aiming to ensure young people are aware of all the options available to them.

Funded by the Skills Funding Agency and National Apprenticeship Service, it will offer young people across Kent the skills they need to get on in work.

The project will work with teachers, careers advisers, parents and governors to support schools and ensure they meet their statutory duties regarding the provision of impartial Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) in relation to apprenticeships and traineeships.



**EDUCATION:** Students at the college and its unique rural school are being prepared for careers in land-based industries. Photos by Jon Whitmore



A core part of the ASK project includes identifying and recruiting 1,000 'apprenticeship champions' in schools across England to support the promotion of apprenticeships in their local areas.

Skills and apprenticeships minister, Robert Halfon, said: "I am committed to transforming this country into an apprenticeship nation.

"Initiatives like ASK and the apprenticeship champions are essential to spreading the message that quality apprenticeships are a ladder of opportunity for all ages and all backgrounds."

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**STRIKING:** An image to promote World AIDS Day and the struggle many continue to face

# 'I was infected with HIV at school'

In a remarkable interview to coincide with World AIDS Day, Lee Stay goes public for the first time about how he was infected with HIV as a teenager through the contaminated blood scandal at the very height of the epidemic's terror and the chain of health crises it sparked. **Chris Britcher** reports...

**I**T WAS 1986. The height of the fear over the AIDS epidemic and the world was gripped by the emergence of an illness which was spread, primarily at least, through sexual contact.

Lee Stay was just 16 at the time. A haemophiliac, a condition which prevents the blood from clotting normally, he attended a special school where his condition could be monitored and treated carefully, having been sent there by his local authority at the age of 11.

Treloars College in Hampshire was a boarding school which specialised in providing an education for the disabled. In addition, it had a specialist unit attached to it for haemophiliacs.

When Lee had joined the school, he was among around 50 other youngsters there who suffered from the condition. The most common treatment was the injection of a blood product called Factor VIII. Formed by donors' blood, it provided the 'factor VIII' needed for the blood to clot for short periods of time. It was a common treatment and allowed haemophiliacs to live a relatively normal life.

But on a fateful day in 1986, Lee was told something which would change his life forever.

"I was having bleeds on average once a week," he explains to KoS, "and every time I needed treatment I was having Factor VIII. I must have started on it back in the late 1970s, and that continued at Treloar's.

"But then, when I was around 16, the college called me in and said I was HIV+. They thought I had been infected in 1983."

He, along with almost all of his fellow haemophiliacs at the college, had been infected. Victims of the blood contamination scandal.

Caused by drug companies responding to a relentless demand for Factor VIII, donors were sought wherever possible. Often sourced in the US, prisoners, drug addicts and the homeless were frequently used. The result was that infected blood was then used and illnesses spread. Most notably, HIV and Hepatitis C. Infected blood was used throughout the 1970s and 1980s before the dangers finally saw tighter safety introduced. Far too late, however, for many.

"I'd seen the campaigns and knew all about HIV and AIDS," explains Mr Stay, who has lived in Kent for many years, first in Dover and now in Ramsgate.

"I was shocked. Basically you're told it's not affecting you at the moment, but that you were not expected to live more than 10 years.

"At that age, you think about how it's passed on. Having sex with other people and forming relationships go out of the window because it's put you in a position to infect others.

"We were told how we had become infected. I was told when there were very few in the college at the time. I subsequently discovered

there were a large number of haemophiliac pupils infected in the same way.

In 2015, we knew that 64 at that centre had died, since then we know that total is now at least 72. Most of my haemophiliac friends at the college are now dead; I think I'm the only one from my year who survived. Most died in the early to mid 1990s."

It is believed some 1,274 haemophiliacs were infected with HIV through contaminated blood. Of whom, just 256 still survive today. But they carry some heavy scars.

The fact that Mr Stay, now 47, is still here today says much about the treatment for the illness – but perhaps more about his remarkable ability to be taken to the brink of death over and over again and somehow survive to fight another day.

Because HIV has been just the tip of an iceberg for a man whose life may have become defined by his illness, but whose positive outlook and mental attitude makes him determined not to have become a victim of it.

He has been forced to have a liver transplant, narrowly avoided death after pneumonia ravaged him, spent months undergoing gruelling chemotherapy for cancer, lost his job and his family. And all as a direct result of blood contamination caused by a product that was provided by the NHS.

He has never spoken publicly of his HIV be-

Continued on page 18

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Continued from page 17

fore – even some of his closest friends are unaware. But he is now keen to highlight not only that those with the condition can now control it and live good lives, but also to add his voice to the growing chorus of those infected by contaminated blood and a desire for proper compensation and an openness into just how such a calamity could befall so many.

Yet he refuses to let his challenging life slow him down or lessen the “positive attitude” he says is embedded within him.

He left college facing a death sentence, but continued to university where he completed a degree at Portsmouth and, in 1992, started work for the ferry firm P&O as a trainee before moving up through the ranks.

“Because of the stigma around HIV I didn’t want to shout about it – only close family know. There is, even today, still a stigma attached.”

After altering the way generations conducted their sex life through the 1980s and 1990s, and riding on the back of a huge wave of publicity, today having HIV is controllable courtesy of what is known as antiretroviral therapy (ART).

It’s not a cure, but the combination of medicines can control the virus so sufferers can live a longer, healthier life and reduce the risk of transmitting HIV to others. It should also prevent the onset of AIDS.

World AIDS Days takes place on December 1 – an annual global event for raising awareness, trying to shrug off that stigma, and tackling the challenges elsewhere in the world, where it continues to be a major problem.

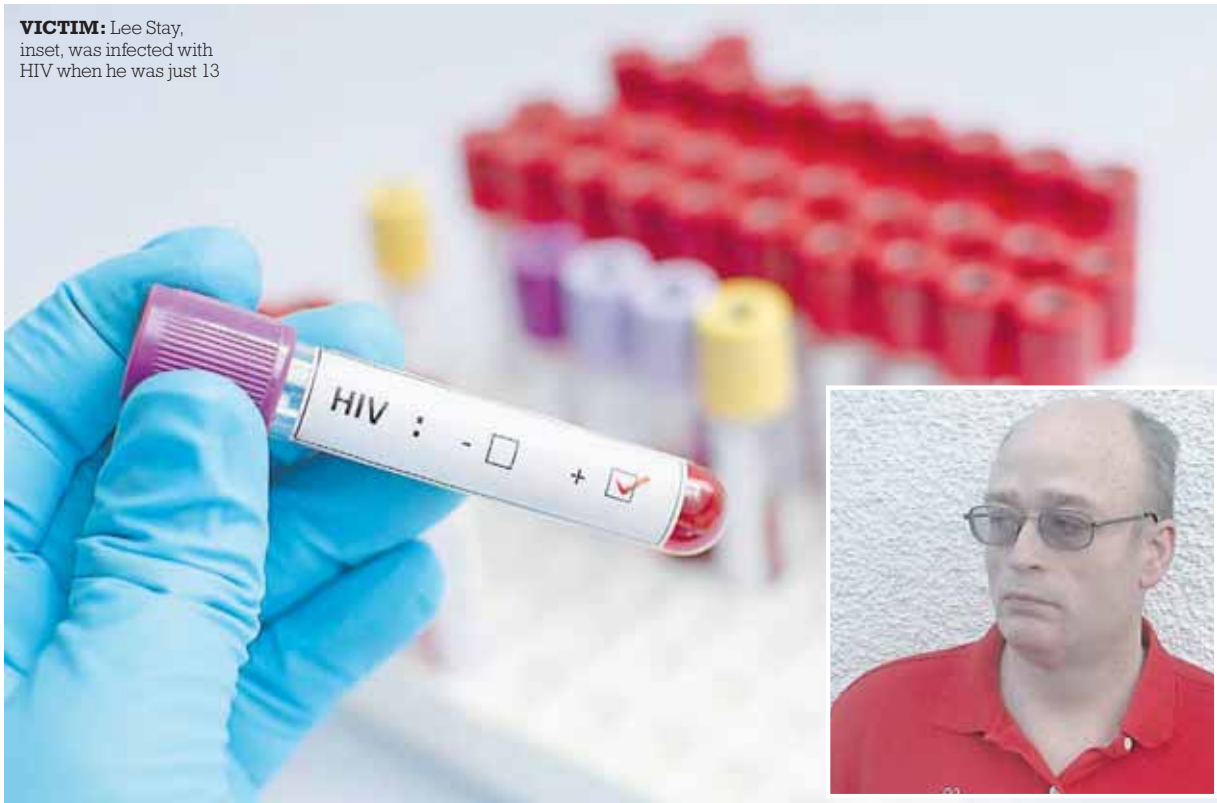
The condition weakens the immune system and leaves a victim unable to fight off infections.

“Around 1995 I became quite ill and had to go to hospital,” Mr Stay recalls, “and it turned out I had contracted PCP – a severe form of pneumonia caused by HIV infection.

“I was very ill at this time. Drugged up to the nines on steroids, in hospital for weeks.

“Of course, I know now that many others must have died from this same condition around

**VICTIM:** Lee Stay, inset, was infected with HIV when he was just 13



that time. I survived it and they put me on a combination of drugs which have kept it at bay ever since.”

For Mr Stay, however, HIV is just one part of a complex jigsaw of health problems caused by that batch of contaminated blood he was administered as a teenager.

Like many other haemophiliacs treated with

blood products, he also received Hepatitis C, a condition which attacks the liver.

By around 2003, P&O shut its Portsmouth operations and Mr Stay sailed off to a new role at its Dover base, gaining a promotion and becoming a specialist in stock control systems shoreside.

“I saw a haemophilia specialist in Canterbury

who told me that at some point something needed to be done about my liver. He sent me to Kings in London for blood tests and within an hours of those results they told me I need urgent treatment. The only option was a liver transplant.”

After around two years on the waiting list, he finally secured a donor and the transplant took

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## PROTEST FOR WORLD AIDS DAY

WORLD AIDS Day takes place on Thursday, December 1, with a series of events taking place across the world to mark the occasion.

Outside Westminster, there will be a protest taking place from 11am where members of the haemophilic community will be raising awareness of the impact of contaminated blood and HIV infection.

A candle will be lit for all of those haemophiliacs who have died.

Lee Stay will be among those travelling to London to take part.

He explains: "World AIDS Day is a reminder of the haemophiliacs and friends we've lost over the years. I used to be in a pop group in school and someone found a picture of six of us and I'm the only one still surviving. That brings it home."



place in 2007 – keeping him bed ridden, and off work, for several months.

The year before, he had started seeing a woman with a number of children from previous relationships. She was aware of his condition.

The internet had allowed him to chat to women and be open and honest about his condition.

He explained: "I was always clear and told them about my infection before meeting anyone. If they said no at that point then that was fine. There was a safety by being online."

"My partner knew the risks at the time, felt she could handle it, but then she worried and we split up. After the transplant we got back together and married in 2008."

As is so often the case, it is the weight of pressure on the shoulders of loved ones that can have the biggest impact on the victim. And Mr Stay had little family to fall back on.

"My mother passed away in 1985, so before it cropped up," Mr Stay remembers, "and my father died in 1989 when I was 19. Dad was aware of the HIV but we never really spoke

about it to be honest. There wasn't much else to discuss."

Life had more hurdles just around the corner.

In October 2008, he was made redundant and left with a pay-off which kept him afloat for around a year. He threw himself, instead, into family life.

However, ill health plagued him and he has not held down a full-time job since.

"Obviously money started becoming an issue," he says of life after redundancy. "There was a lot of pressure on the relationship and it became a struggle. We split up late 2009."

"We stayed closed, and when my home in Dover was repossessed, and she couldn't look after the kids on her own, I moved in with her at her home in Ramsgate, but just as friends as we still got on well."

Now divorced, she has now moved out of the county, but he remains close to her children; one of whom continues to live with him.

His income today comes from the modest sums paid from organisations to help those

caught up in the blood scandal and benefits.

However, having lost his job and relationship, more problems lurked around the corner.

"In around December 2013," he says, "I had been feeling ill and had been since about the October. But I couldn't pinpoint what it was. I was getting a pain down the right side so I went to the doctors. They had recently changed my medication. The consequences of switching meant far from making me better it made me worse."

"I went for tests to try and work out what was wrong. They discovered my kidneys were severely affected and found this mass attached to the tube between bladder and kidney."

The diagnosis was Burkitt Lymphoma, a very aggressive form of blood cancer – caused by the HIV – sparked by a low immune system.

He was sent back to Kings where they started on an aggressive form of chemotherapy. It involved him having to stay in hospital for treatment on a daily basis and often over 24-hour periods. He would spend four months receiving the treatment.

Ironically, the liver transplant had solved the haemophilia problem. However the chemotherapy reduced the platelets in the blood which then made it unable to clot naturally again.

While in hospital he knocked his head and suffered a major bleed on the brain. He had to have a hole drilled in his skull to ease the pressure.

"You really couldn't make this up," he says with a wry smile. He finally returned home in June but needed twice-weekly trips to hospital during which he had frequent blood transfusions. Any hopes of holding down a job were further eroded.

"At the end of August 2014 they called and said they thought the mass had got bigger – so worse rather than better."

"At that point they said there was nothing else to do."

"But then they sent me to St Thomas' in London and they checked again and came to the

conclusion it was actually getting a little smaller."

Referred back to Kings, it continued to shrink. Incredibly, he had escaped another killer illness. Today the lymphoma is undetectable.

Remarkably, his HIV is now so well controlled that too is barely detectable in his body. He was given early access to a pioneering new Hepatitis C drug and that has proved successful too – also now undetectable.

With the liver transplant solving the haemophilia he is, today, perhaps in better condition than ever before.

"I do feel better in myself," he says. "It's been a very long road with plenty of knockbacks, and you never know what's round the corner. I've had so many traumas you can never feel confident going forward."

"It is a lot for one person to cope with and plenty of other people may have given up a long time ago, but life goes on. You get knocked back by something, you climb back up, and then something else knocks you back. The only way I can deal with it is put it to the back of my mind and fight on."

"What makes it hard is that none of this was my fault. I would have had none of it if it hadn't been for the contaminated blood."

"The thing is all these things in combination has finished up with me having no relationship, no job and struggling to get by."

"Yes, there is some anger there especially as things have emerged that the authorities were aware of the risk before I got HIV. That things could have been dealt with a lot earlier. That creates a certain amount of anger."

"But I can't let the anger dominate because it will have a detrimental effect on my health and it would just take over my life."

"But life has been a constant struggle. I was in a £30,000 job up to transplant to have that taken away, to have gone through a divorce, and I don't feel confident about having a relationship now."

"I don't want to go there now. I'd rather just get on with life."

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By Tom Pyman  
tom.pyman@archant.co.uk

**L**EGENDARY artist Sir Peter Blake – the man behind one of the Beatles’ most iconic album covers – has unveiled his latest and most unusual work, marking the coming of smart meters to every home in Great Britain.

Known as the ‘Godfather of British pop art’, Sir Peter, born in Dartford and educated in Gravesend, was made famous for designing the Beatles’ Sgt Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band album cover and was at the forefront of the pop art movement that flourished in Britain and America in the 1950s and 1960s, drawing inspiration from popular and commercial culture.

He went on to design the sleeve for Band Aid’s original Do They Know It’s Christmas in 1984 and the posters for the Live Aid concerts in 1985. He’s also worked on projects for the likes of Eric Clapton and Oasis.

Now he has turned his hand to celebrate a more unusual development.

The Arrival of the Smart Meters takes its inspiration from the in-home displays that are offered with every smart meter, making energy use visible in pounds and pence for the first time. The picture transforms the displays into colourful people, representing the army of smart meter installers bringing this new technology to every home in the country.



**SWITCH:** Sir Peter Blake, who grew up in Kent, is showcasing his latest work the Arrival of the Smart Meters

The Arrival of the Smart Meters is being exhibited at the White Cloth Gallery in Leeds until December 11.

Sir Peter is the latest major cultural figure to take inspiration from smart meters as poet laureate Carol Ann Duffy published Meters, a poem that marked the digital switch over from analogue to smart meters, earlier this year.

Late last year, the Royal Philhar-

monic Orchestra performed A Requiem for Meters, a three-minute piece of music played entirely on instruments made from old gas and electricity meters.

Sir Peter said: “I took inspiration for my latest work from the artist Saul Steinberg, who gave new meaning to everyday objects.

“In this case the smart meters suggested little bodies to me, so I turned



them into people, symbolising the installers who are fitting the meters into every home.

“I love that something that can be seen as rather workaday is being introduced with art, and Arrival of the Smart Meters is an interesting way of highlighting its national significance.”

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# Battered! Storm Angus leaves its mark in Channel

The peace of last Sunday was shattered by the power of wind and rain as they caused chaos



By Chris Britcher  
chris.britcher@archant.co.uk

**S**TORM Angus swept across Kent last weekend, felling trees and causing a major incident in the English Channel after a cargo ship lost power, smashed into a rock barge and started taking on water. The drama occurred just before 9am with treacherous conditions in the sea-

way as gale force winds swept in.

The cargo vessel, the 200-metre long Saga Sky, had 23 people on board prompting lifeboat crews to swing into action.

Eleven of the crew were airlifted to safety by helicopter, as the remainder stayed on board in an effort to steady the ship as it was towed towards the coast by a tug.

RNLI Dover deputy 2nd coxswain, Robert Bendhiah, said: "Facing force 11-

12 weather conditions was one of the biggest jobs for myself as one of the youngest coxswains Dover lifeboat station has historically had.

"I'm very proud of all the RNLI volunteer crew members I had on board with me for maintaining a calm and professional manner in such rough seas during the operation.

"It's not often we work alongside multi-agencies but this showed how well our RNLI lifeboat stations can operate with each other and other SAR [search and

rescue] units."

The cargo vessel was towed to Dungeness and safety.

As our pictures show, Storm Angus caused a rocky ride for many cross Channel ferry passengers too. Meanwhile, trees were also blown down on some key routes in Denton and near Wingham.

The county's battering didn't end there - on Tuesday it also was hit by high winds.

Continued on page 37

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# Medway Focus



## Wen

**I**F THERE is one time of year when Medway really comes into its own, it is surely at Christmas.

Because it was one of our own who captured so much of the Victorian love affair with the season and whose work still continues to form part of festive culture.

After all, if you can escape reference to or performance of Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol over the coming weeks, you'll be one of the very few.

Of course, the towns are extremely proud of their long and significant links with the author and this time of year allows us to celebrate that.

But there is so much more to celebrate about living in Medway than simply latching

on to a past resident.

And there is a danger that generations have, in the past, been too caught up in what the towns once were and offered and too harsh on its period of evolution.

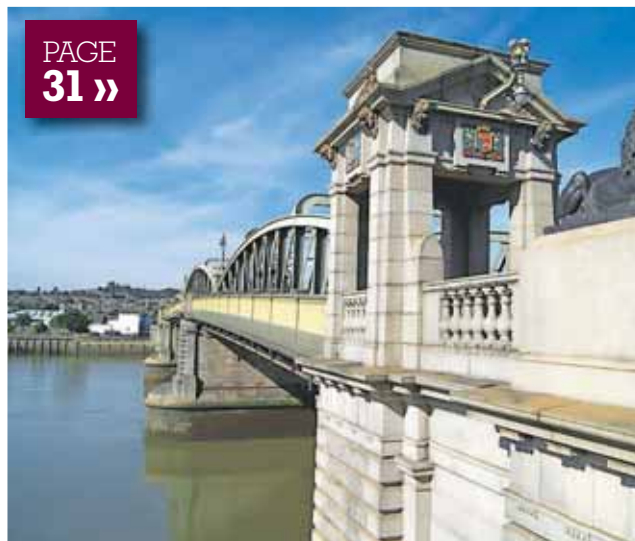
Inside this edition of Medway Focus, free inside your Kent on Sunday, we blend the past and future together to celebrate today. From some of the historic sights you can easily miss or overlook, to some of the developments which will shape the look and feel of where we live and work. You may be surprised at some things and places which are so easily taken for granted, while intrigued by the likes of Rochester Riverside and what it will eventually deliver when complete.

In addition, we take a look at some of the many hobbies and past-times which could allow your talents - hidden or otherwise - to flourish and which you can develop close to home. If the Great British Bake Off inspired you to bake cakes, for example, the good news is there's plenty of other things to get your creative juices flowing.

And if that wasn't enough, we take a look at the range of attractions and events taking place over the Christmas period.

Which, of course, brings us back to Mr Dickens, as you can be sure his influence will be felt - especially during the Dickensian Christmas event on December 3-4 in Rochester. Make sure you have a great time!

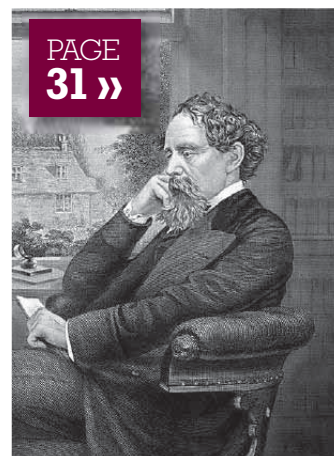
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## Regeneration laps at riverside shores

### ROCHESTER RIVERSIDE

tom.pyman@archant.co.uk

**R**EGENERATION has sat at the very heart of Medway's progress for many years - partly fuelled by the process of transforming its industrial past into an area fit for purpose in the 21st century.

The liberation of land once used for factories or the town's historic dockyards, continues to change the demographic and the landscape, and one of the biggest is continuing to grow.

The Rochester Riverside development is an ambitious £400 million scheme which will bring with it new homes, a boost to transport infrastructure and more besides.

The big money contract for the scheme was awarded earlier this year by Medway Council to Countryside and The Hyde Group to develop around 1,300 new homes, of which a quarter will be affordable housing, and half suitably sized for families, to transform the 74-acre site which adjoins the historic town centre and the new railway station.

However, council bosses insist it's not just homes and jobs that the project will deliver, but a number of other benefits including a range of publicly accessible open spaces, retail and leisure facilities as well as improvements to the gateways between the River Medway and Rochester High Street.

Specifically, these would include a new community based primary school, a nursery, hotels, bars and restaurants, a gym, healthcare facilities, office space and a number of retail units.

The development is part of the local authority's 20-year regeneration plan, devised to help meet the needs of Medway's growing population.

The first planning application on the site is set to be submitted before the end of the year, and if given the green light by the council's planning chiefs, work will be underway by late 2017, with completion expected in 2029.

In terms of work already done, development has so far focused on the southern end of the site, with 73 homes delivered alongside major infrastructure improvements such as the construction of the Doust Way link road, the Southern Gateway public square and improvements to the Bath Hard Lane gateway.

Those homes are now fully occupied and the public square

opened.

The nearby railway station, which was opened by the Duke of Kent at the end of last year following a £26m refurbishment, is now located in a more central location with better transport links than its predecessor, as well as a longer platform, allowing 12-car trains to stop at the station.

Ensuring good access between the station and the Riverside development is one of the key priorities of the project.

Rochester Riverside is a project managed in partnership by Medway Council and the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA). Both organisations have invested substantial funds in preparing the site, flood defences, remediation and engineering works to enable the comprehensive redevelopment of the site.

Rochester Riverside plays a part in Medway's long term regeneration programme which aims to transform the area into a city of 300,000 people over the next 20 years.

In total, the programme is hoped to create more than 20,000 new jobs, up to 16,000 homes and relevant retail and leisure facilities, as well as major transport infrastructure.

Medway has been in a state of reimagining since the Naval dockyard shut in 1984 with the loss of thousands of jobs.





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## Discovering fascinating hidden past

### HIDDEN HISTORY

editorial@kosmedia.co.uk

**T**HERE are few places in Kent where the weight of history puts such pressure on the present and future than across the towns.

From the castle and cathedral in Rochester to the dockyards along the River Medway, a rich and glorious past is very much evident.

But often they obscure the countless other places and destinations which part so much part of the architecture of the area it is easy to

overlook them.

Take, for example, the Rochester Bridge - an ornate, impressive crossing which thousands of motorists and commuters pass over or next to each and every day.

Did you know the Rochester Bridge Trust, which maintains it, has existed since the 14th century, and maintains many of the crossings across the Medway, funded by land presented to it all those years ago?

Then there is Upnor Castle from where the many canons once drove back a marauding Dutch navy. The Elizabethan fortress was ideally placed to protect our own fleet moored at Chatham, but one epic

battle later, failed.

The Mausoleum in woodland near Strood was to be the new burial place for the Earls of Darnley after their tomb at Westminster Abbey was filled.

After decades of decay when it became a play-place for morbid schoolchildren who dared to climb inside the tunnelled tombs, it was taken in by the National Trust and completely renovated.

A spokesman for the trust explained: "The Earls of Darnley were usually buried in Westminster Abbey, but by the late 18th century, their vaults were full.

"In his will, the 3rd Earl, John Bligh, left instructions for a mausoleum to be built in Cobham Park, where he and his descendants could be laid to rest in a grand manner."

The Berengrave Nature Reserve is always good a visit for wildlife. The Friends of Berengrave said: "We have all sort of species of mammals, birds, reptiles, insects and aquatic life. Up to now, 625 species of fauna have been reported, and 112 species of birds have been seen."

Temple Manor in Strood was once a must-visit for Strood schoolchildren and is now in the hands of English Heritage.

A spokesman said: "It was built in the 13th century by the Knights Templar, a military and religious order founded during the Crusades. Located to the west of the River



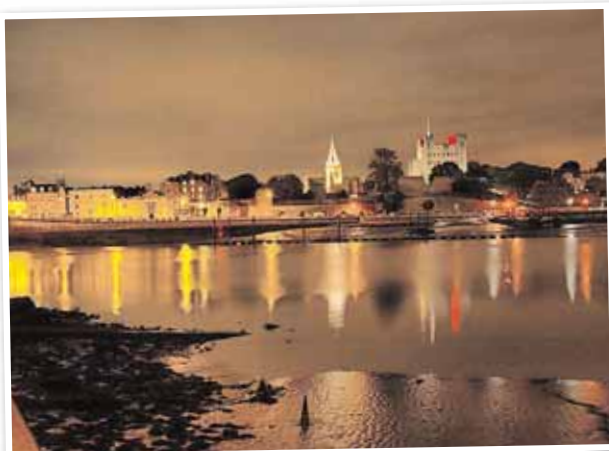
Medway, the hall was designed to provide lodging for dignitaries travelling between Dover and London.

"Now standing in an industrial estate, the manor is a fine example of a medieval building and includes fascinating traces of wall paintings in the first floor hall."

Fort Amherst is famous locally for its spooky Halloween tours, but is also well worth a visit at any other time. Another fortress built and

designed to repel any enemy ships careless enough to wander into the River Medway area.

And that's before we begin on Charles Dickens' well recognised roots here - perhaps most notable with the chalet, moved from his family home in Higham after his death, and now in the grounds of Eastgate House in Rochester High Street. A hidden gem and one of so many right here in Medway.





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**CHEERS:** From Christmas markets, below, to the Dickensian Christmas Festival, there's no need to go anywhere further than right here this festive season.



## Festive fun and frolics from shops to pantos

### CHRISTMAS

editorial@kosmedia.co.uk

IT'S the most wonderful time of the year...and there's absolutely no excuse not to get into the festive spirit across the towns this Christmas.

From open air parades, to markets, pantomimes or even a horse drawn ride through historic streets, there is plenty for everyone this season.

What's more, most of the sparkling Christmas lights have now been officially switched on across the towns, with Rainham's being the last as illuminations go live on December 2.

So the mood is set, but just where are the best places to go to enjoy a glass of mulled wine and truly soak in the atmosphere?

A traditional highlight of the year is the Dickensian Christmas Festival in Rochester which this year runs over the weekend of December 3-4.

With Charles Dickens' famous capture of Victorian England's love of the festive season, it is little wonder it becomes a huge draw each year, packed with shopping stalls, lamp-lit parades, carols and, of course, Father Christmas himself. And all conducted under the majesty of the castle and cathedral. What's more, you can expect to bump into some of Dickens' best-loved characters too as the former city goes back in time to celebrate the season of goodwill.

The Christmas market element of the event also runs the weekend before and after, boasting more than 100 stalls selling decorations, gifts, and food and drink. Plus there's live entertainment too.

North & West

Staying in Rochester, fans of Dickens can watch a performance of A Christmas Carol at the Guildhall museum, all conducted in candlelight. It runs from December 1-4.

For those with a taste for drama, then pantomime season is once again upon us and tickets for the production of Jack and Beanstalk at Chatham's Central Theatre are flying out of the box office. Starring Olympic ice skater, turned TV judge, Robin Cousins, it runs until December 31.

If retail therapy is more your cup of tea, then you can expect big crowds and great deals at the likes of the Hempstead Valley Shopping Centre in Gillingham, which includes a gift fayre until December 4, the Dockside Outlet in Chatham and, of

course, the Pentagon Centre.

For those preferring the independent traders which line Rochester's historic High Street, then there's a chance too to go on a ride in a horse and carriage over the weekend of December 17-18.

For those who prepare taking to the seas, then what about taking a 90 minute ride on the Jacob Marley cruise ship on select dates between December 2-18 for £15 each.

In short, you don't need to leave the towns this festive season to have a memorable build-up to the big day itself.

So get ready for the season of shopping, fun, family entertainment and plenty of mince pies and twinkling lights, all right here on your doorstep.



**CROWDS:** Castle looms in the background of a family fun day out



The Hideaway - Worth



The Corn Bin - Sedlescombe



Saddlehurst Barn - Cranbrook



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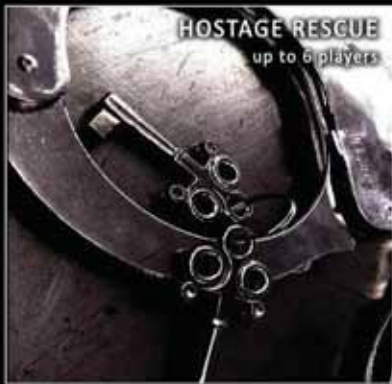


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## Develop your talents with creative thinking

### CLUBS & HOBBIES

editorial@kosmedia.co.uk

**H**OW many times have you thought 'I'd love to learn a language, to dance or paint a picture' but never got round to it? Well perhaps now is the time to finally put those promises into action.

There are plenty of short courses for complete beginners to developed talents and range from drawing, baking, sculpture, dressmaking, acting, singing, jewellery design, creative writing, bookbinding and plenty more besides. All of which are provided by Medway Adult Education which has centres and facilities across the towns so there's bound to be

something near you.

A spokesman explains: "We aim to be supportive, inspiring and creative, applying a focus to individual needs and interests. In other words, we don't just lecture, we work with you and aim to achieve your individual potential."

But the list doesn't end there.

Rambling is well taken care of at the country parks at Riverside and Capstone.

You can learn to fly at Medway Microlights in Rochester, or a plane at the Rochester Airport. For more down to ground fun, children might like to learn how to twirl batons at the Medway Silver Stars, or dig for fossils with the Medway Fossil and Mineral Society. And there are more fishing clubs than you can shake a rod at.

Even Scalextric fans have choic-

es courtesy of the Medway Slot Car Club. A spokesman said: "The whole race evening is controlled by a computer that identifies race position, lap times and league status."

For budding Spielbergs, there is Medway Film Makers. It explained: "We are a small but dedicated and enthusiastic group of film makers who aim to promote education, skills and knowledge in filmmaking - we do all that in a friendly and humorous way."

With those often with their head in the clouds, try stargazing with the Mid-Kent Astronomical Society which said: "Talks are usually made very simple for everyone to understand, and are highly enjoyable."

So don't keep putting it off any longer. Find and develop a new side of you today.







# Waggon at Hale

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**www.waggonathale.com**

## Functions at the Waggon at Hale

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Each package is for a  
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Cheese & Onion Quiches  
Scotch Eggs  
Cocktail Sausages  
Sausage Rolls  
Pork Pies  
Cake Selection

### Package Two: £9.50 per person

Slices of French Stick  
Seasoned Potato Wedges  
Rice  
Mixed Salad  
Your choice of two of the following:  
Chef's Chicken Curry, Chilli Con Carne,  
Lasagne, Cottage Pie

### Package Three: £10.50 per person

Cold meat platter:  
Beef, Gammon, Turkey  
Pate  
Slices of French Stick  
Coleslaw  
Potato Salad  
Mixed Salad  
Poached Dressed Salmon



Continued from page 23



**POWER:** Cross Channel ferries were left reeling, while the RNLI attempted a daring rescue of a stricken ship. All pictures by GARETH FULLER/PA



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*Rodgers and Hammerstein's*

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# How can growth be sustained?

**Martin Whybrow**, of the Green Party for Hythe on Kent County Council, gives his view on Shepway's big plans

**T**HE timing might seem ironic: in yet another week when figures are published highlighting the country's housing crisis, 120 people gathered at Lympe Castle to oppose Shepway District Council's plans for a new garden town of 12,000 homes at Otterpool, just off the M20, near Folkestone Racecourse.

No doubt most if not all of the attendees are comfortably settled in homes of their own. 'Nimbyism' will be the predictable cry of those in favour of the scheme.

However, to make this accusation is to ignore the concerns and does not do justice to residents.

First, there is the sheer scale of the development, albeit one that will be phased over multiple years. The 12,000 homes are in addition to, not instead of, the 8,000 homes within Shepway District Council's places and policies Local Plan, which has recently been out to consultation.

The 20,000 homes that would stem from these two sources, aside from any others that materialise, would increase the population of the district by a staggering 41 per cent. Otterpool alone would be twice the size of Hythe.

This is all happening in a corner of

the country that includes the M20, the Eurotunnel infrastructure, High-speed 1 and, if Highways England has its way, will soon also be foisted with an appalling and unworkable 250-acre lorry park, to add to the existing smaller lorry parks.

The transport links are one of the main 'selling points' for Otterpool but also mean that many local communities have already been blighted. And those transport links are all aligned with moving into and out of the district, not moving within it.

Otterpool looks, for all the marketing spin being employed by the district council, as though it could easily become a commuter town for London, populated by people priced out of the capital.

It is perfectly pertinent to ask, is this area suitable for a development of the scale of Otterpool? How will the road infrastructure cope? Where will the water supply come from in a county that is already extremely water-stressed? How will adult and children's social services and the NHS manage, when these services can barely cope at present? What about air and noise pollution, both of which are currently woefully ignored. And, of course, where will be the jobs to



**PROPOSAL:** Martin Whybrow, inset, says the size of the scheme is simply too big for such an area to cope with

support the population explosion?

It is also the case that Shepway District Council, for all of the taxpayers' money spent on consultants, does not do itself any favours when dealing with its residents. Otterpool kicked off on the wrong footing.

The council spent £5.2 million to buy an initial 357 acres of farmland in November 2015 using 'urgent powers' by the chief executive and there were pronouncements at the time that this was not intended for development.

The touting of garden towns by central government happened soon after and, sure enough, that parcel of

land became part of the rapidly unveiled Otterpool plans. Too much goes on behind closed doors and without transparency.

The council is talking about how working alongside a developer, rather than just handing over the land for third-party development, means it can direct the project, to ensure things like 'long-term stewardship of assets managed in perpetuity for community benefit'. Whatever that means.

Reading between the lines, it is basically saying that there is less chance of Otterpool being a soulless, uninspiring sprawl because the council can

ensure open spaces, encourage walking and cycling, insist on higher quality and more environmentally-friendly building designs than the statutory requirements, and so on. This might win over some people but it might be met with considerable scepticism by many, who are only too familiar with developer-speak, leafy drawings, and fine aspirations that are far removed from the eventual reality.

It is for the district council to win the arguments on Otterpool. It cannot adopt a bunker mentality and dismiss opponents as nimby as this would do a disservice to those it is meant to serve.



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All offers and vehicles offered are subject to availability during the event period. A £99 inc. VAT admin fee (security checks and fuel) will be added to all vehicle purchases, this includes £20 worth of fuel. WJ King reserves the right to withdraw any offer at any time. Telephone calls may be recorded for training purposes. E&OE





**MIRROR IMAGE:** The performance consists of Michael Jackson's greatest hits

## Jackson Live recreation all set to be thrilling experience

Longtime fan, **Ben**, takes to the stage to recreate his idol's moves and vocals...

**O**NE of the most influential artists of all time, Michael Jackson's career spanned nearly five decades of music, and he was continually at the forefront of popular music.

Now in its sixth year of touring, Jackson Live in Concert sees longtime talented fan Ben recreate the Michael Jackson experience with his renditions of all his favourite songs.

Ben's love of Michael Jackson began at an early age. "I've always been a fan of MJ as my mum listened to him. When I was 16 I did an impression of him and a friend said I should try doing a show. So that's where it started," the entertainer reveals.

Ben is joined on the stage by his band and dancers who work their way through all the hits.

"I met my producer James in a pub by pure chance," the performer says. "But everyone who has joined the band has been a fan of Michael, I've been quite lucky."

"We've had band members, and dancers come and go but we always get stronger people to replace them. My technology team have been with me for the last four years."

Jackson Live in Concert features all-live vocals and superb musicians and dancers, fabulous costumes, and of course all the signature dance moves associated so fondly with the undisputed King of Pop.

The performer says he is always trying to improve the show and himself. "MJ was one of the best dancers ever, so I'm definitely still trying to develop that. I'm also always crafting my voice, it's an ongoing thing. The show asks for a

demanding vocal performance so I'm constantly looking after it too.

"Although the show is in its sixth year I never like it to reach its peak when it comes to performing because I think there's always more I can do with the show to make it better. It's really fun, exciting and interesting to take on the role of my idol."

While the show asks for a "demanding vocal performance" Ben claims he "never gets nervous" and does everything he can to make sure his voice stays in pristine condition.

"I drink around five litres of water a day and I see my vocal coach as often as possible. It's really important to look after your voice and so I make sure to do vocal warm ups and warm downs any time I perform."

"If I didn't do all of those things I

wouldn't be able to give 100 per cent when out on stage."

If Ben had to describe Jackson Live in three words he'd call it "a concert experience" because though the show is a tribute, Ben claims he is the number one act of his kind in the UK, meaning he is the closest experience audiences can get to Michael Jackson.

When it comes to audience perception, he says: "The show is a massive nostalgia fulfilling experience. I still go to watch tribute acts and cinema showings. I hope they leave saying it was a night they really enjoyed and that if they don't already own one, that they go out and buy a Michael Jackson CD the next day."

The concert is coming to Dartford's Orchard Theatre on December 1.

Tickets can be purchased from [orchardtheatre.co.uk](http://orchardtheatre.co.uk)

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your event to:  
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# Fliptastic Ashford trampolining park gets £1.5m jumping start

By Emily King

emily.king@archant.co.uk

**E**NTREPRENEURS Lisa and Steve Wootton are investing £1.5 million to launch Flip Out, a trampolining park which will be based in Ashford.

The Ashford arena, which is expected to create up to 60 jobs, will be the first Flip Out to open in East Kent.

Mr and Ms Wootton, who live in Kingsnorth, are transforming a 28,000sqft former packaging factory on Ashford's Henwood Industrial Estate to provide a leisure experience for all ages and abilities.

As well as featuring dozens of connected trampolines that will allow you to spring, trick or flip off the walls, Flip Out Ashford will have stunt boxes, wall runners, slam dunks, dodgeball, a ninja warriors course, and fitness classes. All you'll need to do is book a place.

There will be four party rooms for private celebrations and corporate functions. They also plan to develop a café on the second floor which they hope will become a popular meeting place for the local



**INVESTING:** Lisa and Steve Wootton in the space they hope to transform

community and businesses.

Free parking will be provided for more than 100 vehicles.

"We're very excited to be bringing the Flip Out trampolining revolution to Ashford," says Ms Wootton. "Having often taken our two boys to trampoline parks, we wanted to launch our own venue that would be fun, healthy entertainment not just for kids but for the whole family.

"It's also perfect for couples, groups, and companies looking for a team-building experience with a difference."

Mr Wootton adds: "Ashford is the perfect place for East Kent's first Flip Out. The town is growing rapidly and going through some dynamic changes and we want to be part of that exciting future.

"It's also our home patch and there's nothing like this here at the

moment. We think Ashford deserves to be part of the Flip Out phenomenon."

Work on the site is scheduled to start within the next three weeks and the couple anticipate opening their doors in early 2017.

Flip Out originated in Australia in 2012 and now has seven parks and arenas across the UK.

For further information, visit [www.flipout.co.uk](http://www.flipout.co.uk)

## Addams Family musical

SAMANTHA Womack will star in The Addams Family musical coming to Dartford's Orchard Theatre from October 31 to November 4, 2017.

For tickets, visit [orchardtheatre.co.uk](http://orchardtheatre.co.uk)



## Festive Floral Roadshow

THEATRICAL anecdotes and award-winning floral designs come together in the seasonally festive Frozen Floral Roadshow at Bexley's Hall Place on December 1.

This entertaining evening will be performed and presented by floral display supremo and RHS gold medal winner, Mig Kimpton.

## The Christmas Tales

THE Canterbury Tales will host an artisan gift fair and a magical family-friendly experience from November 26.

To find out more and book, visit [www.canterburytales.org.uk](http://www.canterburytales.org.uk).



## Shopping centre ice rink

BLUEWATER'S outdoor ice rink has promised great skating for all ages, this Christmas, and is now open until January 2, 2017, following the initial skate by Bean Primary School pupils.

Child admission is £9, junior (13-16 years) £10, adults £11, and family £34.

For tickets, visit [www.bluewater.co.uk](http://www.bluewater.co.uk).

## LEGAL AND PUBLIC NOTICES

### Goods Vehicle Operator's Licence

Maidstone & Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust of Maidstone Hospital, Hermitage Lane, Maidstone, Kent ME16 9QQ is applying to change an existing licence as follows

To add an operating centre to keep 6 goods vehicles and 0 trailers at Maidstone & Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust MTW Linen Services, Heronden Road, Parkwood Industrial Estate, Maidstone, Kent ME15 9YR.

Owners or occupiers of land (including buildings) near the operating centre(s) who believe that their use or enjoyment of that land would be affected, should make written representations to the Traffic Commissioner at Hillcrest House, 386 Harehills Lane, Leeds, LS9 6NF, stating their reasons, within 21 days of this notice. Representors must at the same time send a copy of their representations to the applicant at the address given at the top of this notice. A Guide to Making Representations is available from the Traffic Commissioner's office.

### LICENSING ACT 2003 NOTICE OF APPLICATION FOR A NEW PREMISES LICENCE

Notice is hereby given that Speldhurst Parish Council, acting through a management committee jointly appointed by Speldhurst Parish Council and Langton Green Community Sports Association, a registered charity, has applied to Tunbridge Wells Borough Council for a new premises licence for:

The Pavilion, Langton Green Recreation Ground, Speldhurst Road, Langton Green, Kent TN3 0JJ for: The sale or provision of alcohol Monday-Saturday 11:00-00:00, and Sunday 11:00-22:30, on-premises only.

Any person who wishes to view the application can contact the council on 01892 554034. Any representations regarding this application must be made in writing to the council by 23rd December 2016.

It is an offence knowingly or recklessly to make a false statement in connection with an application. A person guilty of an offence under this section is liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding £5,000.

Dated 24 November 2016



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## Tunnel idea is just plain crazy

THE Gravesham MP's advocacy [KoS, last week] of a long tunnel from south of the A2 to north of the A14 makes one wonder what we pay these people for – certainly not commonsense and the reasonable.

Whilst it may be 'possible' to build an uninterrupted tunnel over 75 miles in length, it's never going to be built. Proposing such nonsense is just a spoiling tactic when practical, realistic and achievable solutions are what we, the voting public, requires of him and his like.

**Sam Goodenough,**  
 Tunbridge Wells

## Tax is the real petrol scandal

YOU quoted Charlie Elphike MP [KoS, last week] in an item about fuel prices saying "it's clear drivers are being ripped off by greedy big oil companies and others in the fuel supply chain".

He may be right, but by far the biggest rip-off is the tax put on by the government, which is just under 80p per litre!

**Terry Hudson,**  
 Whitstable

## Blackadder and misquoting

I WONDER if I could respond to a number of your letters last week?

'If voting changed anything, it would be abolished' is ascribed to Ken Livingstone, it actually belongs to Mark Twain – Livingstone was merely quoting it – not quite accurately.

Blackadder uses the very old dramatic ploy of reducing the appalling, the absolute inconceivable horror of a situation and rendering it humorous by irony. Blackadder is very, very serious about what it says. So does Oh What a Lovely War, portraying the First World War as a musical.

And Patrick Foy is right; we should subscribe to the sentiment "never again", but which we do only by remaining strong.

**Hugh Masters,**  
 Pembury

## Trump era is not one to rejoice in

I WOULD take issue with Mr Bullen's view of the result of the US presidential election [KoS, letters, last week].

Flawed is a massive understatement describing Mr Trump, a man who has spent obscene amounts of money on his presidential campaign.

The ugliness and xenophobia have

## LETTER OF THE WEEK



## Farage 'moving to US' is biggest joke of all

IS IT just me or is there something increasingly desperate about Nigel Farage as he approaches the end of his final stint at Ukip leader?

The man has demonstrated a backside-kissing attitude to Donald Trump which should make each and every one of his supporters cringe.

After all, wasn't this a man who has spent recent years stood on a platform extolling the virtues of how Great Britain should toady up to no world leader or nation and relish standing on its own two feet, king of all it surveys?

Instead, he has spent the last two weeks trying to get into the US president-elect's inner circle. To top it all off, there were even reports this week that he might actually leave the UK and move to the US instead!

Is the irony of the man who led us to Brexit then jumping ship before Article 50 has been triggered lost on those who believed him in the run-up to the referendum vote?

Rather than seek to establish himself a seat at Westminster – which surely if he believes his own hype should be easy to achieve, despite his abject failure thus far to do just that at repeated elections, most of them right here in Kent – he is stepping down from frontline politics, and cosying up to a US president for whom international relations appear a dot on the horizon in his drive to focus inwardly on the struggles the US is facing and the impact of globalisation.

So, come on Nigel, you delivered on your promise of getting Britain to leave the EU, now, at the very least, have the balls to actually stay in the country as we look to make our way through the carnage it is likely to cause.

Although, if you do leave, then I suspect the queue to wave you off will stretch all the way to Trump Towers.

**Terry Smith**  
 Canterbury

already shown itself with the far right going so far as saying America is for white people by right, which I think would be disputed by native Americans brutally displaced by white immigrants not so long ago.

The other obscenity is the dismissal of the rape of the environment upon which coming generations depend.

Mr Trump has also caused anger in Scotland building on a precious site of special scientific interest near Aberdeen, and not following up on promises of employment at his developments. Money talks. He has billions to spend, but would deny poorer Americans the right to health care.

If this is the dawn of a new order, I dread to think what it will be like.

**Jean Nobbs,**  
 Sevenoaks

## Oh Greg, stop sitting on fence

YOUR article in last week's edition contained a very detailed account of how MPs would vote should it go to parliament to decide whether to stay or leave Europe and, to a man and woman, regardless of where their original sentiments lay, would all vote to leave taking note of the

majority view.

Well, almost to a man; Greg Clark – and who else, sits indelicately on the fence, merely citing the vote's outcome.

So no surprise there then; the ultimate careerist; he could end up as a default choice for PM sometime in the future simply because he's offended no one.

**Ben Hardy,**  
 Tunbridge Wells

## Delay Article 50 and pay the price

IT IS obvious that many MPs are determined to protect their places on the enhanced career structure offered by UK membership of the EU by frustrating the desire of the British people to leave the latter.

In view of the fact the majority of those voting in Kent made clear their support for Brexit the electorate must make clear to their MPs they expect them to honour this wish and not to obstruct Article 50.

This is particularly important to our county in view of the burden currently being borne by Kentish ratepayers resulting from the EU's absurd policy of open borders.

**Colin Bullen,**  
 Tonbridge

## Let's get out and trade globally

I TOTALLY agree with Clive Wilkins-Oppler [KoS letters, last week].

All these remoaners who are trying to thwart the will of the people could be in for a very big shock if they in some way alter the Brexit process

We should all be embracing this great opportunity; why should we stick with a diminishing market? There is a big new world out there to trade with.

**Michael Carr,**  
 Ashford

## Don't write off Lib Dems yet

EDWARD Baker [KoS letters, last week] is misinformed about the chances of the Lib Dems winning in Swanley.

We just missed taking a town council seat on White Oak from the fast disintegrating Tories by one vote, beating Labour.

With the Tory group in meltdown and Labour in thrall to Momentum, we are fast building up support in the town in readiness for further by-elections.

**Dr Alan Bullion,**  
 Lib Dem Parliamentary Spokesman for Swanley and Sevenoaks

## KOS 10 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

AS part of our commitment to providing the best service to you, we have produced our 10 guiding principles

**Kent on Sunday will:**

- 1) Be available in every postcode in Kent.
- 2) Be fair, accurate and balanced.
- 3) Be written in clear, concise English.

- 4) Not be overly sensational.
- 5) Have a sense of humour.
- 6) Have an easily understood division between news, comment and advertising.
- 7) Seek to celebrate as well as constructively criticise.
- 8) Highlight topical issues of concern to North & West

people living in the county.

9) Spotlight individual cases which raise broader concerns.

10) Champion causes that it feels are important to the well-being of the county and its people.

**We hope you enjoy Kent on Sunday.**  
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**East Blean Woods**  
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**Herne Bay**

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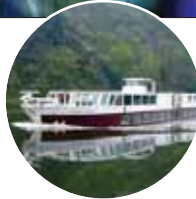
## Dutch Delights New Year Party Cruise

By Rail from Ebbsfleet

29 December, 2016 • Quote: NY12-KOS

Celebrate the New Year in style on board the 4-star MS Johannes Brahms river cruiser. Starting in Amsterdam we have plenty of time to enjoy the Dutch capital before sailing past Kinderdijk, which has 19 windmills in a stunning landscape straight from a Rembrandt painting. We continue to Rotterdam, where we count down to 2017 with a New Year party and a spectacular fireworks display over the city's Erasmus Bridge.

**INCLUDED:** Escorted return Eurostar travel from Ebbsfleet (Ebbsfleet parking from just £21 for 4 days) • 4-night full board plus cruise sharing a twin-bed rear cabin on Main Deck - upgrades available • Beer, wine and soft drinks served at lunch, dinner and from 6pm to midnight at the bar • Entertainment • Transfers abroad • Services of our Cruise Director on board



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## Ferrari & Lamborghini Live the Dream in Maranello

By Air from Gatwick

10 March, 2017 • Quote: FL3-KOS

Come with us to Maranello and Modena in Northern Italy - home to legendary Ferrari and Lamborghini sports cars. Our four-day break takes in all the sights of Maranello including The Ferrari Museum and the Fiorano Test Track. We will also visit the Enzo Ferrari and Lamborghini Museums in Modena. No trip to Maranello would be complete without taking a Ferrari out for a spin. Test drives are possible with a host of models to choose from.

**INCLUDED:** Escorted throughout abroad • 3 nights B&B sharing a twin/double room at the 4-star Maranello Village Hotel plus 1 dinner • Admissions to: The Ferrari Museum, The Enzo Ferrari Museum PLUS guided bus tour inside the Fiorino test-track proving grounds and Viale Enzo Ferrari and The Lamborghini Museums • Return Easyjet flights London Gatwick to Bologna - hand luggage included • All transfers abroad



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## Back to the 60s

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Friday, 6 January, 2017 • Quote: NY1-2-KOS

Join us for a private party that extends the New Year festivities and takes us on a trip down memory lane - for over 40s only - at Warner Bembridge, on the seafront on the Isle of Wight. Our weekend break includes a gala New Year's Eve party, lots of nostalgic fun and Free Drinks every night. We've lined up a super entertainment programme featuring tributes to the Beatles, the Stylistics and Tom Jones plus the ever-popular team pantomime.

**INCLUDED:** Free drinks from 6pm to midnight every night - house beers & spirits, wine by the glass, pumped soft drinks & pumped mixers • 3 dinners and 3 breakfasts • Live nightly entertainment • 3 nights en-suite chalet - room in main hotel upgrades available • Return car ferry & Free parking



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## Viareggio Carnival & Taste of Tuscany

By Air from Gatwick

22 February, 2017 • Quote: IC2-KOS

This super holiday takes in the Italian Riviera's premier Carnival at Viareggio - undoubtedly the most popular event of its kind in Tuscany. We also visit Siena, San Gimignano, Pisa, Lucca and Florence. With seven nights in the popular resort of Lido di Camaiore, free drinks each evening, a wine tasting and tickets to the carnival, this an unmissable holiday.

**INCLUDED:** Escorted throughout abroad • Return flights with luggage to Pisa from Gatwick - supp't may apply • 7 nights sharing a twin/double room at the Hotel Smeraldo, Lido di Camaiore, with buffet breakfasts & dinners and free drinks 6pm to 10pm every night - local brands of beer, wine & spirits • All excursions • A wine tasting • Carnival Parade entry • All t rnsfers abroad





By Steve Loader  
editorial@kosmedia.co.uk

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## Cult car label for the C-HR?

**PREVIEW:** Toyota's stylish and arresting crossover coupé, should bury memories of the ill-fated Urban Cruiser, and wake up the opposition...

**T**OYOTA is having another go at selling a small crossover.

And the C-HR, arriving in January, could be the most interesting crossover to hit the market so far; a sharp contrast to its dreary predecessor, the Urban Cruiser (2009-2012).

Costing from £20,995 in petrol format and rising to £27,995 for the hybrid variant in flagship Dynamic trim, the C-HR has potential 'cult car' written all over it, providing it drives better than the ill-fated Cruiser – which won't be hard.

Such appeal comes from SUV-inspired coupé styling. Like the rival Nissan Juke – which helped drive the Urban Cruiser to its ignominious end – it won't get plaudits for the raked and cramped rear roofline and headroom, but it will turn heads.

The styling isn't too close to the Juke's Marmite variety though, where you love it or loathe it.

It's a clever car too, sharing the platform and offering the 1.8-litre petrol-electric powertrain of the Prius hybrid, with an all-wheel drive too.

Standard kit includes dual-zone automatic air-con, 17-inch alloys, auto wipers and a smart touchscreen with integrated reversing camera.

Interestingly, rather than camouflage the screen into the dashboard, Toyota has created a



standalone position jutting from the middle of a front cabin and dashboard that is more interesting than we have seen for some time on a Toyota.

The newcomer is said to rival the Nissan Qashqai and VW Tiguan for size, but the C-HR looks more likely to forge a sporting crossover niche all its own.

Toyota has even said it will produce a competition version, which will do its image no harm.

Hyped in that way, it could become another car bought as much for profile as what it delivers as a car, as in the case of the MINI, Fiat 500 and DS3, in the 'manbag/handbag' car-buying sector.



# Outlander PHEV drives the 'Mitsi' revival

Japanese marque has trashed its typecast image as a 4x4 and pick-ups specialist and become more mould-breaking and technology-led, **writes Steve Loader...**

**F**OR years Mitsubishi's UK sales relied on the venerable Shogun off-roader and 'Tonka Toy' L200 pick-up – popular with private buyers as well as builders and farmers.

But the Japanese marque's registrations have leapt more than 60 per cent so far this year and 300 per cent in October. OK, so its UK market share is still less than a half per cent, but growth like that is always welcome and it's all down to the mould-breaking Plug-in Hybrid Electric Vehicle (PHEV) version of its Outlander SUV launched earlier this year.

The hybrid format works better on bigger cars where the extra weight and bulk of two powertrains and a battery pack is more easily absorbed within the overall vehicle.

So, hidden beneath the chunky exterior of this third generation Outlander is no less than 200bhp, comprising a 120bhp 2.0-litre petrol engine and two 40bhp electric motors, each driving a separate axle to enable the PHEV to offer 4x4 if necessary.

But don't get the idea all this combines to endow the PHEV with phenomenal performance; the petrol



unit is mainly used to charge the batteries en route to keep the car rolling in electric vehicle (EV) mode after the car's plug-in charge – good for around 30 miles – has run out.

This set-up avoids the range anxiety of a full electric car, while fuel costs are virtually zero if

you keep the car topped up with electricity.

The PHEV is also road tax exempt due to low emissions while the entry price of just £28,304, after the £5,000 Government plug-in car grant, is the same as the Outlander diesel equivalent, making it a



bargain – particularly for tax-conscious company car user choosers. They will pay just five per cent Benefit in Kind tax – while rivals driving a conventional equivalent could be hit by 25 per cent or more.

And there's no congestion charge for London commuters either – you

<b>Mitsubishi</b>	
<b>Outlander PHEV</b>	
Price:	<b>from £33,304</b>
Driving appeal:	★★★
Image:	★★★★
Space:	★★★★★
Value:	★★★★★
Running costs:	★★★★★
How green?:	★★★★★
Best rival:	<b>Lexus RX</b>

start to see why Mitsubishi is on a bit of a roll.

So what's the catch with the PHEV?

Well, the styling of the latest generation Outlander is a slight step backwards from the previous car; less sharply defined and more anonymous, and the PHEV version loses the option to have seven seats – but it has no hybrid rivals offering that either at present.

The Outlander is also set up for comfort rather than a sporting drive, though this should suit most would be buyers, who will want the car for its impressive people and load-carrying capacity, generous specification, hard-wearing and good quality trimming, 4x4 ability to cover rougher ground without too much jolting and, of course, the economy and tax savings available for such a big car.

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By Steve Loader  
editorial@kosmedia.co.uk



## A mobility revolution - Motability

**M**OTABILITY has radically changed the way disabled people and their families live their lives.

Motoring for the disabled used to be limited to those who could drive themselves, and usually in the form of a notoriously unstable three-wheeler 'Invacar', with a lot of in-built stigma, but room for the driver only - not much use for families - and a tendency to tip over on corners or in high winds.

That changed with the launch of the Government-backed Motability charity in 1978, which calculated an allowance that disabled people could use towards a vehicle of their choice.

The Government-backed scheme enables them to get on the road for much less than it would cost to buy or

lease a new or nearly new car privately, and helps them and their families with potentially costly adaptations for controls or wheelchair access.

On top of that, the scheme's regular payments can take care of everyday running costs, from insurance, maintenance and repairs, to breakdown assistance - a huge reassurance when motoring costs are soaring.

What is more, Motability does not insist that the disabled person is the driver; the car is made available for the benefit of that person, which means that up to two other named drivers can be on the car's insurance cover instead of the disabled person.

■ **For more about this liberating scheme for disabled people, see inside this special supplement.**



**FLEXIBLE:** Motability buyers have the same range of choices as any able-bodied person, including the latest Renault Scenic MPV, the versatile Nissan Qashqai crossover or capacious Skoda Octavia estate



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# Motability fact file

**U**P to two nominated drivers can drive a Motability vehicle, but the disabled person qualifying for the scheme does not have to be one of them. The drivers may be friends or relatives, and parents or carers can apply on behalf of a child aged three years or older.

The car has to be used only for the benefit of the disabled person, such as a shopping trip or collecting a prescription; they don't even have to be in the car. A third insured driver can be added for a small payment.

If you receive the Higher Rate Mobility Component of the Disability Living Allowance or the War Pensioners' Mobility Supplement, you can apply for a Motability lease by exchanging part or all of that allowance.

Motability is a worry-free package that includes:

- A choice of around 2,000 car models
- Insurance, servicing and maintenance
- RAC breakdown assistance
- Road tax

- Tyre and windscreen replacement

- 60,000 mileage allowance over three years.

Car dimensions vary: seat height, door opening angle and storage space for wheelchairs and equipment can all affect whether the car works for you and your particular disability or not, but your local dealer can take you through a questionnaire designed to ensure the car and Motability is right for you.

Many special adaptations are available free to help with speed and steering, signalling and safety, stowage, and seating and access.

The Motability package continues to the end of your three-year lease, with a seamless transfer to your new car. Around 600,000 customers currently choose Motability and 97 per cent say they would recommend the Scheme to their friends.



**VERSATILE STARS:** the capacious FIAT 500L and Peugeot Partner Tepee MPVs, plus the versatile and stylish Renault Captur crossover.



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Advance Payment

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- Cruise control and speed limiter
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Juke Range: URBAN 29.7-64.2mpg (9.5-4.4L/100km); EXTRA URBAN 46.3-74.3mpg (6.1-3.8L/100km); COMBINED 38.7-70.6mpg (7.3-4.0L/100km); CO2 emissions 172-104g/km.  
Advance Payment prices are available to applications made during the current pricing period (01/10/2016 to 08/01/2017) at participating Dealers only. Models subject to availability. Written details available on request. TO BE ELIGIBLE FOR THE MOTABILITY SCHEME, YOU MUST BE IN RECEIPT OF THE HIGHER RATE MOTABILITY COMPONENT OF DISABILITY LIVING ALLOWANCE, THE ENHANCED RATE MOTABILITY COMPONENT OF THE PERSONAL INDEPENDENCE PAYMENT, THE WAR PENSIONERS' MOTABILITY SUPPLEMENT OR THE ARMED FORCES INDEPENDENCE PAYMENT. The facilities offered are for the hire (bailment) of goods. This offer is eligible for Customers only and is not available in conjunction with any other Nissan offer or scheme. This is a trademark of Motability, registered charity 299745. Models shown are for illustration purposes only. MPG figures are obtained from laboratory testing, in accordance with 2004/3/EC directives and intended for comparisons between vehicles and may not reflect real driving results. (Optional equipment, maintenance, driving behaviour, road and weather conditions may affect the official results.) Nissan Motor (GB) Ltd, The Rivers Office Park, Denham Way, Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire WD39YS.



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Official fuel consumption for the ŠKODA range in mpg (litres/100km): Urban 31.4 (9.0) to 72.4 (3.9); Extra Urban 45.6 (6.2) to 88.3 (3.2); Combined 39.2 (7.2) to 80.7 (3.5). CO<sub>2</sub> emissions for the ŠKODA range in mpg are 164 to 90 g/km. The advertised range is correct as of 10 October 2016 and is subject to change. Standard EU test figures for comparative purposes and may not reflect real driving results.

# Top tips on making your Motability choice

## Small cars

Tend to have the lowest advance payments, running costs and CO<sub>2</sub>. Two to three-door cars generally have wider doors with larger opening angles, which makes access easier, but closing the doors and fitting in narrow parking spaces may be harder. Four to five-door cars benefit from superior back seat access – useful if you often have more than one passenger.

## Medium cars

Often sold as hatchbacks and will have a slightly bigger boot than a small car, but the same door arguments apply.

## Family cars

Family cars are large four-door saloons or five-door hatchbacks and are considerably larger than medium sized cars. Hatchbacks usually have the best boot capacity.

## Crossovers

As the name implies, these versatile models merge several sectors: family hatchbacks and (see later) MPVs and SUVs.

## Estate cars

Usually longer than a standard saloon or hatchback, with useful space for mobility aids in the boot.



**SPACE OR STYLE:** the van-shaped body of the Nissan NV200 Combi makes it superb for WAV conversion – as shown here - while the Skoda Fabia Estate is a spacious yet nippy supermini option



recently, all 4x4s had 4-wheel drive, but many people now buy for the SUV styling and opt for a front-wheel drive version to save fuel.

## Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles (WAVs)

WAVs are cars converted to carry passengers travelling in their wheelchair or those who wish to drive from a wheelchair. WAVs may be best if you have trouble getting in and out of the car from your wheelchair and would prefer to remain in it when travelling as a passenger. WAVs come in different sizes and have many standard features. The Motability website has a specific WAV Search.

but this can add to the car's bulk so make sure you check it out with a test drive before committing.

**Multi-purpose vehicles (MPV)**  
Ranging from small to large, MPVs

can seat up to nine people. The seats are higher, with more headroom, legroom and width. Some have large sliding side doors, which obviously improve access for those with disabilities.

## 4x4 and Sport Utility Vehicles (SUV)

The term '4x4' is usually used to describe vehicles designed for off-road use, which generally have higher ground clearance. Until



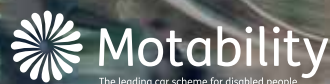
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\*Advance payment offers are only valid for Motability applications to 31 December 2016 and are correct at time of going to press. Motability is a trademark of Motability. Registered charity number 299745.

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# You must take the test drive...

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**What are you looking for?** – ease of access, seat and ride comfort, how refined it is in terms of engine, wind, tyre and mechanical noise. And especially...

**Do you like the controls?** – many carmakers are going their own way

in search of the best ergonomics or human interaction with the controls, but they don't suit everyone such as the various electronic handbrakes. Importantly, can it be adapted?

**Is it the right spec?** – try to get a test car as close to the one you are interested in, even if you have to wait a few days for the dealer to arrange it or have to go to another dealership. Chances are the dealer will have a higher spec model than the one you want, it's then easier to be seduced by the car.

**Make it a family outing** – it can be a painful process of 'are we there yet?' proportions, but try to get as

many of the would-be car users involved in the test drive – drivers and non-drivers. The sort of issues here are: yes, it's great for those in the front but what about comfort and visibility in the rear, and how is it particularly for the disabled driver or passenger?



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Fuel consumption figures for the Fiat range in mpg (l/100km): Urban 29.7 (9.5) – 68.9 (4.1); Extra Urban 46.3 (6.1) – 97.4 (2.9); Combined 38.2 (7.4) – 83.1 (3.4). CO<sub>2</sub> emissions 171 – 88 g/km. Fuel consumption and CO<sub>2</sub> figures based on standard EU tests for comparative purposes and may not reflect real driving results. \*Vehicles shown are Fiat 500L 1.4 95hp Lounge with NIL Advance Payment, plus Fiat 500L Trekking 1.4 95hp with NIL Advance Payment and Fiat 500L MPW Lounge 1.3 MultiJet 95hp with Advance Payment of £945, both featured with optional Bicolour paint at additional cost. ^The Fiat 500L MPW boot space is based on all rear seats folded and tumbled down. 5 standard seats and two extra seats for persons up to 1.65m. Advance Payments are correct at time of going to press and subject to orders being placed by 31st December 2016. Not available in conjunction with any other offer. Terms & Conditions apply. Offer may be varied and withdrawn at any time. Subject to stock availability.



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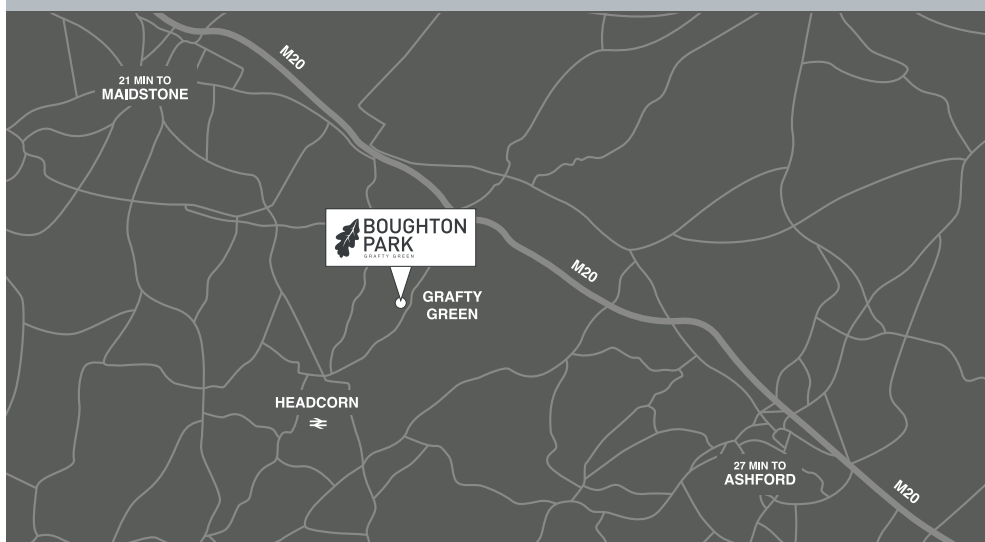
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# Gloucestershire to be first visitors

Kent find out who they will play next year as fixtures revealed

## Cricket

By Tom Pyman

tom.pyman@archant.co.uk

GLOUCESTERSHIRE will be the first visitors to the Spitfire Ground next year after the county championship fixtures were revealed this week.

Kent kick off their promotion hopes on April 7 at home before making the short trip to Sussex the following week.

In a schedule shake-up for 2017, the Royal London One-Day Cup group stage takes place early season before the NatWest T20 Blast begins in a new mid-summer slot.

The One-Day Cup campaign begins with the visit of Hampshire on April 27, while T20 action kicks off at home to Essex on July 9.

The county championship season concludes on September 25 at Canterbury as Kent take on Glamorgan.

It comes after the club announced a new president, with former all-rounder Charles Rowe succeeding Lady Kingsdown, who steps down after two years in the role.

The right-hander scored six centuries and 30 half-centuries in an 11-year first-class career which included eight years at Kent before a three-year spell at Glamorgan before his retirement.

Born in Hong Kong, Mr Rowe also took 128 wickets with his off spin and was capped by Kent in 1977 and Glamorgan in 1983.

On his appointment, Mr Rowe said: "I'm surprised, delighted and very honoured to be elected president."

"I look forward to supporting the county to the best of my ability during my term and wish the squads all



**HOME:** The Spitfire Ground, St Lawrence in Canterbury

the best for the coming season."

Lady Kingsdown added: "It has been an honour and a privilege to serve as president for the past two years and to see the club in general and the team in particular, under the great captaincy of Sam Northeast, flourish."

"Two years in post have given me

the opportunity to understand more fully how every department of the club is essential to every other, and getting to know the personnel well has been such a pleasure.

"To my successor I wish as much joy as I have had, and may the club, in all its facets, continue to prosper under his presidency."

## Robinson takes over as manager at The Valley

## Football

CHARLTON have appointed Karl Robinson as the Sky Bet League One club's new manager.

The 36-year-old makes a quick return to football having been sacked by MK Dons at the end of October.

Robinson takes over at The Valley following the departure of Russell Slade on November 13, and has signed a two-and-a-half-year contract with the south London club.

"I am honoured to have been appointed manager of Charlton and can't wait to get started," said Robinson, who was set to meet the players ahead of Saturday's home match against second-placed Sheffield United and will then take



**APPOINTED:** Karl Robinson

full control from Monday.

"Joining such a huge club with a large, passionate fanbase is a really exciting proposition.

"I've inherited a talented squad

and I'll be doing everything I can to get the club back into the Championship as soon as possible.

"I like my teams to play attractive football and if we all pull together, I firmly believe we can start moving up the table and enjoy a successful season."

Charlton chief executive Katrien Meire added on the club's official website: "Following a thorough appointment process, Karl emerged as the outstanding candidate."

"He is a very talented, forward-thinking manager and I'm delighted we have been able to bring him to Charlton."

Under the guidance of caretaker boss Kevin Nugent, the Addicks have won both their matches since Slade's departure including a 5-1 victory at Bristol Rovers on Tuesday night.

## Sport Shorts

» Email [sports@kosmedia.co.uk](mailto:sports@kosmedia.co.uk) or call Tom Pyman on 01233653477

## Trio depart as exodus continues at Margate

THE exodus at cash-strapped Margate continued this week with three more leaving Hartsdown Park to join newly-taken over Essex outfit Billericay Town.

Luke Moore, Matthew Johnson and Danny Fitzsimons have all left the club as boss Nikki Bull attempts to balance the books, after telling KoS last month the financial ramifications of the Gate's early exit from the FA Cup would be felt for weeks to come.

Moore, who joined the club in 2014 from League One side AFC Wimbledon and was part of the side promoted to the National League South in 2015, extended his stay in Thanet in the summer by signing a one year deal, but has now departed.

Also joining Craig Edwards' side is former Ebbsfleet United midfielder Johnson, who moved to the Blues last December on loan before signing permanently in March, and defender Fitzsimons who also joined the struggling Kent club in the summer after spells at Luton and Dartford.



**CONCERN:** Nikki Bull



**COMEBACK:** Ditton player Barry Hawkins bounced back from defeat

## Ditton potter Hawkins delivers fine response

DITTON'S Barry Hawkins proved his mettle by bouncing back from a gut-wrenching defeat over the weekend with victory just hours later.

Hawkins had led 5-1 in the Northern Ireland Open final, but the Kent potter appeared to lose his nerve and ultimately fell to a 9-8 defeat to Mark King, who claimed his first-ever ranking event.

However, just 48 hours later, he bounced back with a comfortable 6-0 victory over David John at the UK Championship in York, achieving the tournament's first century in the process.

Hawkins has endured a busy 2016, and succeeded in beating old foe Ronnie O'Sullivan at the world championships in April before crashing out at the quarter-finals.

## Holmes backs trampoline boom

ONE of a number of trampoline parks opened in Kent has been visited by the county's double Olympic champion Dame Kelly Holmes.

Jump In recently opened in Tonbridge, and the heroine of the 2004 Athens Olympics was there to encourage youngsters to keep active.

Now a motivational speaker, Dame Kelly, who lives in Hildenborough, said: "Not only is it great fun, but

jumping has a number of health benefits associated with it.

"As well as being a great cardio workout you also use multiple parts of your body."

CEO Gavin Lucas added: "Trampoline has become one of the fastest growing sports in the country, it's great fun, affordable and open to all ages and all skill levels, and is a fantastic way to exercise."

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# BLUE'S ANTONY COSTA

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